The CRUISE of the SHINING LIGHT

NORMAN DUNCAN

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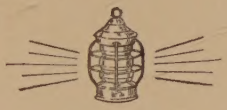
SHINING LIGHT



BY

NORMAN DUNCAN

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"DOCTOR LUKE *of the LABRADOR*"

"THE WAY *of the* SEA"

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TO
MY ELDER BROTHER
ROBERT KENNEDY DUNCAN
THIS BOOK IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

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I

NICHOLAS TOP

MY uncle, Nicholas Top, of Twist Tickle, was of a cut so grotesque that folk forgot their manners when he stumped abroad. Bowling through the streets of St. John's, which twice a year he tapped with staff and wooden leg, myself in leading—bowling cheerily, with his last rag spread, as he said, and be damned to the chart—he left a swirling wake of amazement: craning necks, open mouths, round eyes, grins so frank, the beholders being taken unaware, that 'twas simple to distinguish hearts of pity from savage ones.

Small wonder they stared; my uncle was a broad, long-bodied, scowling, grim-lipped runt, with the arms and chest of an ape, a leg lacking, three fingers of the left hand gone at the knuckles, an ankle botched in the mending (the surgery his own), a jaw out of place, a

round head set low between gigantic shoulders upon a thick neck: the whole forever clad in a fantastic miscellany of water-side slops, wrinkled above, where he was large, flapping below, where he was lean, and chosen with a nautical contempt for fit and fashion, but with a mysteriously perverse regard for the value of a penny.

"An' how much, lad," says he, in the water-side slop-shops, "is a penny saved?"

'Twas strange that of all men he should teach me this old-fashioned maxim as though 'twere meant for my own practice. 'Twas well enough for him, it seemed; but 'twas an incumbrance of wisdom in the singular case of the lad that was I.

"A penny made, sir," says I.

"Co'—rect!" says he, with satisfaction.

There was more to be wondered at: beginning at my uncle's left ear, which was itself sadly puckered and patched, a wide, rough scar, of changing color, as his temper went, cut a great swath in his wiry hair, curving clear over the crown of his head. A second scar, of lesser dimension and ghastly look, lay upon his forehead, over the right eyebrow, to which though by nature drooping to a glower, it gave a sharp upward twist, so that in a way to surprise the stranger he was in good humor or bad, cynical or sullen, according to the point of approach.

There were two rolls of flabby flesh under his chin, and a puff of fat under each of his quick little eyes; and from the puffs to the lower chin, which was half

submerged in the folds of a black cravat, the broad, mottled expanse was grown wild with short gray beard, save where, on the left cheek, a ragged scar (the third) kept it bare and livid. 'Twas plain the man had blundered into some quarrel of wind and sea, whence he had been indifferently ejected, in the way of the sea, to live or die, as might chance: whereof—doubtless to account for his possession of me—he would tell that my father had been lost in the adventure.

"Swep' away by the third big sea," says he, his face wan with the terror of that time, his body shrunk in the chair and so uneasy that I was moved against my will to doubt the tale. "May God A'mighty forgive un the deed he done!"

"Was it a sore, wicked thing my father did?"

"God forgive un—an' me!"

"Is you sure, Uncle Nick?"

"God forgive un!"

"You're not likin' my poor father," I complained, "for the sinful thing he done."

"'Tis a sinful wicked world us dwells in," says he. "An' I 'low, b'y," says he, in anxious warning, "that afore you goes t' bed the night. . . . Pass the bottle. Thank 'e, lad. . . . that afore you goes t' bed the night you'd best get a new grip on that there little anchor I've give ye t' hang to."

"An' what's that?" says I.

"The twenty-third psa'm," says he, his bottle tipped, "for safety!"

My uncle would have (as he said) no dealings with a glass. There was none in the places familiar to his eyes; and when by chance, in the tap-rooms of the city, he came face to face with himself, he would start away with a fervent malediction upon the rogue in the mirror, consigning him to perdition without hope of passage into some easier state.

'Twas anathema most feeling and complete.

"Hist!" cries I. "You're never so bad as *that*, Uncle Nick!"

"None worse," says he, "than that there ol' lost rascal!"

I did not believe it.

"I isn't took a steady look at my ol' figger-'ead," he was used to saying, with his little eyes widened to excite wonder, "this five year! In p'int o' looks," says he, smirking, vain as you please, "I'm t' windward o' most o' the bullies when I trims my beard. Ah, lad, they's a raft o' bar-maids an' water-side widows would wed ol' Nicholas Top. An' why? 'Tain't money, God knows! for Nicholas Top haves none. Nar a dollar that a lone water-side widow could nose out! An' if 'tisn't money," says he, "why, Lord love us! 'tis *looks*. It can't be nothin' else. 'Tis looks or money with the widows; they cares not which. Come, now, lad," says he, "would you 'low it *could* be otherwise than looks?"

I must wag my head.

"Lord love us, Danniel" says he, so vain—so innocently vain of the face he would not see—that my lips twitch with laughter to think of it. "You an' them

water-side widows is got a wonderful judgment for looks!"

By this I was flattered.

"Now, look you!" says he, being now in his cups and darkly confidential with me, "I'm havin', as I says, no dealin' with a glass. An' why? Accordin' t' the water-side widows 'tis not ill-favor o' face. Then why? I'm tellin' you: 'Tis just because," says he, tapping the table with his forefinger, "Nick Top isn't able t' look hisself in the eye. . . . Pass the bottle. Thank 'e, lad. . . . There you haves it!" says he, with a pitiful little catch of the breath. "Nicholas Top haves a wonderful bad eye!"

I must nod my assent and commiseration.

"In p'int o' beauty," says my uncle, "Nicholas Top is perfeckly content with the judgment o' water-side widows, which can't be beat; but for these five year, Lord help un! he've had no love for the eye in his very own head."

'Twas said in such chagrin and depth of sadness that I was moved to melancholy.

"His own eye, lad," he would repeat, "in his very own head!"

My uncle, I confess, had indeed a hint too much of the cunning and furtive about both gait and glance to escape remark in strange places. 'Twas a pity—and a mystery. That he should hang his head who might have held it high! At Twist Tickle, to be sure, he would hop hither and yon in a fashion surprisingly light (and right cheerful); but abroad 'twas either

swagger or slink. Upon occasions 'twas manifest to all the world that following evil he walked in shame and terror. These times were periodic, as shall be told: wherein, because of his simplicity, which was unspoiled—whatever the rascality he was in the way of practising—he would betray the features of hang-dog villany, conceiving all the while that he had cleverly masked himself with virtue.

"Child," says he, in that high gentleness by which he was distinguished, "take the old man's hand. Never fear t' clasp it, lad! Ye're abroad in respectable company."

I would clasp it in childish faith.

"Abroad," says he, defiantly, "in highly respectable company!"

Ah, well! whether rogue or gentleman, upon whom rascality was writ, the years were to tell. These, at any rate, were the sinister aspects of Nicholas Top, of Twist Tickle, whose foster-child I was, growing in such mystery as never was before, I fancy, and thriving in love not of the blood but rich and anxious as love may be: and who shall say that the love which is of the blood—a dull thing, foreordained—is more discerning, more solicitous, more deep and abiding than that which chances, however strangely, in the turmoil and changes of the life we live? To restore confidence, the old dog was furnished with an ample, genial belly; and albeit at times he drank to excess, and despite the five years' suspicion of the eye in his very own head, his eyes were blue and clear and clean-edged, with

little lights of fun and tenderness and truth twinkling in their depths. I would have you know that as a child I loved the scarred and broken old ape: this with a child's devotion, the beauty of which (for 'tis the way of the heart) is not to be matched in later years, whatever may be told. Nor in these days, when I am full-grown and understand, will I have a word spoken in his dishonor.

Not I, by Heaven!

I came to Twist Tickle, as I am informed, on the wings of a southeasterly gale: which winds are of mean spirit and sullenly tenacious—a great rush of ill weather, overflowing the world, blowing gray and high and cold. At sea 'twas breaking in a geyser of white water on the Resurrection Rock; and ashore, in the meagre shelter of Meeting House Hill, the church-bell clanged fearsomely in a swirl of descending wind: the gloaming of a wild day, indeed! The *Shining Light* came lurching through the frothy sea with the wind astern: a flash of white in the mist, vanishing among the careering waves, doughtily reappearing—growing the while into the stature of a small craft of parts, making harbor under a black, tumultuous sky. Beyond the Toads, where there is a turmoil of breaking water, she made a sad mess of it, so that the folk of the Tickle, watching the strange appearance from the heads, made sure she had gone down; but she struggled out of the spray and tumble, in the end, and came to harbor unscathed in the place where Nicholas Top, himself

the skipper and crew, was born and fished as a lad.

They boarded him, and (as they tell) he was brisk and grim and dripping upon the deck—with the lights dancing in his eyes: those which are lit by the mastery of a ship at sea.

"Ay, mates," says he, "I'm come back. An'," says he, "I'd thank ye t' tread lightly, for I've a wee passenger below, which I've no wish t' have woke. He's by way o' bein' a bit of a gentleman," says he, "an' I'd not have ye take a liberty."

This made them stare.

"An' I'd not," my uncle repeated, steadily, glancing from eye to eye, "have ye take a liberty."

They wondered the more.

"A bit of a gentleman!" says my uncle, in savage challenge. "A bit of a gentleman!"

He would tell them no more, nor ever did; but in imperturbable serenity and certainty of purpose builded a tight little house in a nook of Old Wives' Cove, within the harbor, where the *Shining Light* might lie snug; and there he dwelt with the child he had, placidly fishing the grounds with hook and line, save at such times as he set out upon some ill-seeming business to the city, whence he returned at ease, it seemed, with himself and his errand, but something grayer, they say, than before. The child he reared was in the beginning conscious of no incongruity, but clothed the old man with every grace and goodly quality, in faith and understanding, as children will: for these knowing

ones, with clearer sight than we, perceive neither guile nor weakness nor any lack of beauty in those who foster them—God be thanked!—whatever the nature and outward show may be. There is a beauty common to us all, neither greater nor less in any of us, which these childish hearts discover. Looking upon us, they are blind or of transcendent vision, as you will: the same in issue—so what matter?—since they find no ugliness anywhere. 'Tis the way, it may be, that God looks upon His world: either in the blindness of love forgiving us or in His greater wisdom knowing that the sins of men do serve His purpose and are like virtue in His plan.

But this is a mystery. . . .

▪

II

AT THE SIGN OF THE ANCHOR AND CHAIN

THE Anchor and Chain is a warm, pleasantly noisy place by the water-side at St. John's, with a not ungrateful reek of rum and tobacco for such outport folk as we; forever filled, too, with big, twinkling, trumpeting men, of our simple kind, which is the sort the sea rears. There for many a mellow hour of the night was I perched upon a chair at my uncle's side, delighting in the cheer which enclosed me—in the pop of the cork, the inspiriting passage of the black bottle, the boisterous talk and salty tales, the free laughter—but in which I might not yet, being then but seven years old, actively partake.

When in the first of it my uncle called for his dram, he would never fail to catch the bar-maid's hand, squeeze it under the table, with his left eyelid falling and his displaced jaw solemnly ajar, informing her the while, behind his thumb and forefinger, the rest of that hand being gone, that I was a devil of a teetotaler: by which (as I thought, and, I'll be bound, he knew well I would think) my years were excused and I was admitted to the company of whiskered skippers

upon a footing of equality. 'Tis every man's privilege, to be sure, to drink rum or not, as he will, without loss of dignity.

If his mates would have me drink a glass with them my uncle would not hinder.

"A nip o' ginger-ale," says I, brash as a sealing-captain.

'Twas the despair of my uncle. "Lord love us!" says he, looking with horror upon the bottle.

"T' *you*, sir," says I, with my glass aloft, "an' t' the whole bally crew o' ye!"

"Belly-wash!" groans my uncle.

And so, brave and jolly as the rest of them, forgetting the doses of jalap in store for me when I was got back to the Tickle, I would now have my ninny (as they called it). Had the bar-maids left off kissing me —but they would not; no, they would kiss me upon every coming, and if I had nothing to order 'twas a kiss for my virtue, and if I drank 'twas a smack for my engaging manliness; and my only satisfaction was to damn them heartily—under my breath, mark you! lest I be soundly thrashed on the spot for this profanity, my uncle, though you may now misconceive his character, being in those days quick to punish me. But such are women: in a childless place, being themselves childless, they cannot resist a child, but would kiss queer lips, and be glad o' the chance, because a child is lovely to women, intruding where no children are.

As a child of seven I hated the bar-maids of the Anchor and Chain, because they would kiss me against

my will when the whiskered skippers went untouched. But that was long ago. . . .

I must tell that at the Anchor and Chain my uncle blundered in with Tom Bull, of the *Green Billow*, the owner and skipper thereof, trading the ports of the West Coast, then coastwise, but (I fancy) not averse to a smuggling opportunity, both ways, with the French Islands to the south of us; at any rate, 'twas plain, before the talk was over, that he needed no lights to make the harbor of St.-Pierre, Miquelon, of a dark time. 'Twas a red-whiskered, flaring, bulbous-nosed giant, with infantile eyes, containing more of wonder and patience than men need. He was clad in yellow oil-skins, a-drip, glistening in the light of the lamps, for he was newly come in from the rain: a bitter night, the wind in the northeast, with a black fog abroad (I remember it well)—a wet, black night, the rain driving past the red-curtained windows of the Anchor and Chain, the streets swept clean of men, ourselves light-hearted and warm, indifferent, being ashore from the wind, the cloudy night, the vicious, crested waves of the open, where men must never laugh nor touch a glass.

They must have a dram together in a stall removed from the congregation of steaming men at the long bar. And when the maid had fetched the bottle, Tom Bull raised it, regarded it doubtfully, cocked his head, looked my shamefaced uncle in the eye.

"An' what might this be?" says he.

"'Tis knowed hereabouts, in the langwitch o' waterside widows," replies my uncle, mildly, "as a bottle o' Cheap an' Nasty."

Tom Bull put the bottle aside.

"'*Tis* cheap, I'll be bound," says my uncle; "but 'tis not so wonderful nasty, Tom," he grieved, "when 'tis the best t' be had."

"Skipper Nicholas," says Tom, in wonder, "wasn't you give aforetime t' the use o' Long Tom?"

My uncle nodded.

"Dear man!" Tom Bull sighed.

My uncle looked away. Tom Bull seemed now first to observe his impoverished appearance, and attacked it with frankly curious eyes, which roamed without shame over my uncle's shrinking person; and my uncle winced under this inquisition.

"Pour your liquor," growls he, "an' be content!"

Tom Bull grasped the bottle, unafraid of the contents, unabashed by the rebuke. "An' Skipper Nicholas," asks he, "where did you manage t' pick up the young feller?"

My uncle would not attend.

"Eh?" Tom Bull persisted. "Where did you come across o' he?"

"This," says my uncle, with a gentle tug at my ear, "is Dannie."

"Ay; but whose young one?"

"Tom Callaway's son."

"Tom Callaway's son!" cries Tom Bull.

There was that about me to stir surprise; with those

generous days so long gone by, I will not gainsay it. Nor will I hold Tom Bull in fault for doubting, though he stared me, up and down, until I blushed and turned uneasy while his astonished eyes were upon me.

"Tom Callaway's son!" cries he again.

That I was.

"The same," says my uncle.

Forthwith was I once more inspected, without reserve—for a child has no complaint to make in such cases—and with rising wonder, which, in the end, caused Tom Bull to gape and gasp; but I was now less concerned with the scrutiny, being, after all, long used to the impertinence of the curious, than with the phenomena it occasioned. My uncle's friend had tipped the bottle, and was now become so deeply engaged with my appearance that the yellow whiskey tumbled into his glass by fits and starts, until the allowance was far beyond that which, upon information supplied me by my uncle, I deemed proper (or polite) for any man to have at one time. The measurement of drams was in those bibulous days important to me—of much more agreeable interest, indeed, than the impression I was designed to make upon the 'longshore world.

"No such nonsense!" exclaims Tom Bull. "Tom Callaway died 'ithout a copper t' bury un."

"Tom Callaway," says my uncle, evasively, "didn't have no *call* t' be buried; he was drown-ded."

My uncle's old shipmate sipped his whiskey with absent, but grateful, relish, his eyes continuing to wander over so much of me as grew above the table,

which was little enough. Presently my uncle was subjected to the same severe appraisement, and wriggled under it in guilty way—an appraisement of the waterside slops: the limp and shabby cast-off apparel which scantily enveloped his great chest, insufficient for the bitter rain then sweeping the streets. Thence the glance of this Tom Bull went blankly over the foggy room, pausing nowhere upon the faces of the folk at the bar, but coming to rest, at last, upon the fly-blown rafters (where was no interest), whence, suddenly, it dropped to my hand, which lay idle and sparkling upon the sticky table.

"Tom Callaway's son!" he mused.

My hand was taken, spread down upon the calloused palm of Tom Bull, in disregard of my frown, and for a long time the man stared in puzzled silence at what there he saw. 'Twas very still, indeed, in the little stall where we three sat; the boisterous laughter, the shuffling and tramp of heavy boots, the clink of glasses, the beating of the rain upon the windows seemed far away.

"I'd not be s'prised," says Tom Bull, in the low, hoarse voice of awe, "if them there was di'monds!"

"They is," says my uncle, with satisfaction.

"Di'monds!" sighs Tom Bull. "My God!"

'Twas boredom—the intimate inspection, the question, the start of surprise. 'Twas all inevitable, so familiar—so distastefully intrusive, too. 'Twas a boredom hard to suffer, and never would have been borne had not the occasion of it been my uncle's delight.

'Twas always the same: Diamonds? ay, diamonds! and then the gasped "My God!" They would pry into this, by the Lord! and never be stopped by my scowl and the shrinking of my flesh. It may be that the parade my misguided guardian made of me invited the intimacy, and, if so, I have no cry to raise against the memory of it; but, whatever, they made free with the child that was I, and boldly, though 'twas most boresome and ungrateful to me. As a child my hand was fingered and eyed by every 'longshore jack, coastwise skipper, and foreign captain from the Turkey Cock to the sign of The King George. And wherever I went upon the streets of St. John's in those days there was no escape: the glitter of me stopped folk in their tracks—to turn and stare and wonder and pass muttering on.

"Three in that one, Tom," adds my uncle.

'Twas a moment before Tom Bull had mastered his amazement. "Well, well!" cries he. "Di'monds! Three in that one! Lord, Lord, think o' that! This wee feller with all them di'monds! An' Skipper Nicholas," says he, drawing closer to my beaming uncle, "this here red stone," says he, touching the ring on my third finger, "would be a jool? A ruby, like as not?"

"'Tis that," says my uncle.

"An' this here?" Tom Bull continues, selecting my little finger.

"Well, now, Tom," says my uncle, with gusto, for he delighted in these discussions, "I 'low I better tell you 'bout that. Ye see, lad," says he, "that's a seal-

ring, Tom. I'm told that gentlemen wears un t' stamp the wax o' their corr-ee-spondence. 'Twas Sir Harry that give me the trick o' that. It haves a D for Daniel, an' a C for Callaway; an' it haves a T in the middle, Tom, for Top. I 'iowed I'd get the Top in somewheres, so I put it in atween the D an' the C t' have it lie snug: for I'm not wantin' this here little Dannie t' forget that Top was t' the wheel in his younger days." He turned to me, and in a voice quite broken with affection, and sadly hopeless, somehow, as I recall, "Dannie, lad," says he, "ye'll never forget, will ye, that Top was t' the wheel? God bless ye, child! Well, Tom," turning now to his shipmate, "ye're a man much sailed t' foreign parts, an' ye wouldn't think it ungenteel, would ye, for a lad like Dannie t' wear a seal-ring? No? I'm wonderful glad o' that. For, Tom," says he, most earnestly, "I'm wantin' Dannie t' be a gentleman. He's just *got* t' be a gentleman!"

"A gentleman, Nick?"

"He've *got* t' be a gentleman!"

"You'll never manage that, Nick Top," says Tom Bull.

"Not manage it!" my uncle indignantly complained. "Why, look, Tom Bull—jus' *look*—at them there jools! An' *that's* on'y a poor beginnin'!"

Tom Bull laid my hand very gingerly upon the table, as though 'twere a thing not lightly to be handled lest it fall to pieces in his grasp. He drew my left hand from my pocket and got it under the light.

"Two pearls," says my uncle, "'longside a emerald. Aft o' that you'll be like t' find two more di'monds. Them's first-water Brazil, Tom."

Tom Bull inquiringly touched my watch-guard.

"Eighteen karat," says my uncle.

Tom Bull drew the watch from its pocket and let it lie glittering in his hand; the jewels, set shyly in the midst of the chasing, glowed in the twilight of the stall.

"Solid," says my uncle.

Tom Bull touched my velvet jacket with the tip of his finger.

"Imported direck," says my uncle, "from Lon'on. Direck, Tom—is you hearin' me?—direck from Lon'on. Not," says he, with quick consideration, "that we've no respeck for home talent. My, my, no! Dannie haves a matter o' thirteen outfits done right here in St. John's. You beat about Water Street for a week, Tom, an' you'll *sight* un. Fill your glass, Tom! We're well met this night. Leave me talk t' you, lad. Leave me talk t' ye about Dannie. Fill up, an' may the Lord prosper your smugglin'! 'Tis a wild night without. I'm glad enough t' be in harbor. 'Tis a dirty night; but 'tis not blowin' *here*, Tom—an' that's the bottle; pour your dram, lad, an' take it like a man! God save us! but a bottle's the b'y t' make a fair wind of a head wind. Tom," says he, laying a hand on my head—which was the ultimate expression of his affection—"you jus' ought t' clap eyes on this here little ol' Dannie when he've donned his Highland

kilts. He's a little divil of a dandy then, I'm tellin' you. Never a lad o' the city can match un, by the Lord! Not match my little Dannie! Clap eyes," says he, "on good ol' little Dannie! Lord save ye, but of all the young fellers you've knowed he's the finest figger of a lad—"

"Uncle Nick!" I cried, in pain—in pain to be excused (as shall be told).

"Hush, lad!" croons he. "Never mind!"

I could not help it.

"An' talkin' about outfits, Tom," says my uncle, "this here damn little ol' Dannie, bein' a gentleman, haves his *best*—from Lon'on. Ye can't blame un, Tom; they *all* doos it."

'Twas all hands t' the pumps for poor Tom Bull. "Dear man!" he gasped, his confusion quite accomplished.

"An' *paid* for," says my uncle.

Tom Bull looked up.

"'Tis all," says my uncle, solemnly jerking thumb down towards the bowels of the earth, "paid for!"

Tom Bull gulped the dregs of his whiskey.

By-and-by, having had his glass—and still with the puzzle of myself to mystify his poor wits—Tom Bull departed. My uncle and I still kept to the stall, for there was an inch of spirits in my uncle's glass, and always, though the night was late and stormy, a large possibility for new company. 'Twas grown exceeding noisy in a far corner of the place, where a foreign

captain, in from the north (Fogo, I take it), loaded with fish for Italian ports, was yielding to his liquor; and I was intent upon this proceeding, wondering whether or not they would soon take to quarrelling, as often happened in that tap-room, when Tom Bull softly came again, having gone but a step beyond the threshold of the place. He stepped, as though aimlessly, to our place, like a man watched, fearing the hand of the law; and for a time he sat musing, toying with the glass he had left.

"Skipper Nicholas," says he, presently, "I 'low Dannie Callaway haves a friend t' buy un all them jools?"

"This here little ol' Dannie," says my uncle, with another little reassuring tug at my ear, "haves no friend in all the world but me."

'Twas true.

"Not one?"

"Nar a friend in all the world but ol' Nick Top o' Twist Tickle."

"An' *you* give un them jools?"

"I did."

There was a pause. Tom Bull was distraught, my uncle quivering; and I was interested in the rain on the panes and in the foreign captain who was yielding to his liquor like a fool or a half-grown boy. I conceived a contempt for that shaven, scrawny skipper—I remember it well. That he should drink himself drunk like a boy unused to liquor! Faugh! 'Twas a sickening sight. He would involve himself in some

drunken brawl, I made sure, when even I, a child, knew better than to misuse the black bottle in this unkind way. 'Twas the passage from Spain—and the rocks of this and the rocks of that—and 'twas the virtues of a fore-and-after and the vices of an English square rig for the foremast. He'd stand by the square rig; and there were Newfoundlanders at his table to dispute the opinion. The good Lord only knew what would come of it! And the rain was on the panes, and the night was black, and the wind was playing devil-tricks on the great sea, where square-rigged foremasts and fore-and-afters were fighting for their lives. A dirty night at sea—a dirty night, God help us!

"Skipper Nicholas," says Tom Bull, in an anxious whisper, "I'm tied up t' Judby's wharf, bound out at dawn, if the wind holds. I 'low you is in trouble, lad, along o' them jools. An' if you wants t' cut an' run—"

In the pause my uncle scowled.

—"The little *Good Omen*," says Tom Bull, under his breath, "is your'n t' command!"

'Twas kind of intention, no doubt, but done in folly —in stupid (if not befuddled) misconception of the old man's mettle. My uncle sat quite still, frowning into his glass; the purple color crept into the long, crescent scar of his scalp, his unkempt beard bristled like a boar's back, the flesh of his cheeks, in composure of a ruddy hue, turned a spotty crimson and white, with the web of veins swelling ominously. All the storm signals I had, with the acumen of the child who suffers unerring discipline, mastered to that hour were at the

mast-head, prognosticating a rare explosion of rage. But there was no stirring on my uncle's part; he continued to stare into his glass, with his hairy brows drawn quite over his eyes.

The blundering fellow leaned close to my uncle's ear. "If 'tis turn-tail or chokee for you, along o' them jools," says he, "I'll put you across—"

My uncle's eyes shifted to his staff.

—"T' the Frenchmen—"

My uncle's great right hand was softly approaching his staff.

—"Well," says the blundering Tom Bull, "give the old girl a wind with some slap to it, I'll put you across in—"

My uncle fetched him a smart crack on the pate, so that the man leaped away, in indignation, and vigorously rubbed his head, but durst not swear (for he was a Methodist), and, being thus desperately situated, could say nothing at all, but could only petulantly whimper and stamp his foot, which I thought a mean thing for a man to do in such circumstances. "A poor way," says he, at last, "t' treat an old shipmate!" I thought it marvellously weak; my uncle would have had some real and searching thing to say—some slashing words (and, may be, a blow). "An you isn't a thief," cries Tom Bull, in anger, "you *looks* it, anyhow. An' the rig o' that lad bears me out. Where'd you come by them jools? Eh?" he demanded. "Where'd you come by them di'monds and pearls? Where'd you come by them rubies an' watches? *You*

—Nick Top: Twist Tickle hook-an'-line man! Buyin' di'monds for a pauper," he snorted, "an' drinkin' Cheap an' Nasty! Them things don't mix, Nick Top. Go be hanged! The police 'll cotch ye yet."

"No," says my uncle, gently; "not yet."

Tom Bull stamped out in a rage.

"No," my uncle repeated, wiping the sweat from his brow, "Tom Bull forgotten; the police 'll not cotch me. Oh no, Dannie!" he sighed. "They'll not cotch me—not yet!"

Then out of the black night came late company like a squall o' wind: Cap'n Jack Large, no less! newly in from Cadiz, in salt, with a spanking passage to make water-side folk stare at him (the *Last Hope* was the scandal of her owners). He turned the tap-room into an uproar; and no man would believe his tale. 'Twas beyond belief, with Longway's trim, new, two-hundred-ton *Flying Fish*, of the same sailing, not yet reported! And sighting Nicholas Top and me, Cap'n Jack Large cast off the cronies he had gathered in the tap-room progress of the night, and came to our stall, as I expected when he bore in from the rain, and sent my uncle's bottle of Cheap and Nasty off with contempt, and called for a bottle of Long Tom (the best, as I knew, the Anchor and Chain afforded), which must be broached under his eye, and said he would drink with us until we were turned out or dawn came. Lord, how I loved that man, as a child, in those days: his jollity and bigness and courage and

sea-clear eyes! 'Twas grand to feel, aside from the comfort of him, that he had put grown folk away to fondle the child on his knee—a mystery, to be sure, but yet a grateful thing. Indeed, 'twas marvellously comfortable to sit close to him. But I never saw him again: for the *Last Hope* went down, with a cargo of mean fish, in the fall of the next year, in the sea between St. John's and the West Indies.

But that night—

"Cap'n Jack," says I, "you quit that basket."

He laughed.

"You quit her," I pleaded. "But ecod, man!" says I, "please quit her. An you don't I'll never see you more."

"An' you'll never care," cries he. "Not *you*, Master Callaway!"

"Do you quit her, man!"

"I isn't able," says he, drawing me to his knee; "for, Dannie," says he, his blue eyes alight, "they isn't ar another man in Newf'un'land would take that basket t' sea!"

I sighed.

"Come, Dannie," says he, "what 'll ye take t' drink?"

"A nip o' ginger-ale," says I, dolefully.

Cap'n Jack put his arm around the bar-maid. "Fetch Dannie," says he, "the brand that comes from over-seas."

Off she went

"Lord love us!" groans my uncle; "that's two."

"'Twill do un no harm, Nick," says Cap'n Jack. "You just dose un well when you gets un back t' the Tickle."

"I will," says my uncle.

He did. . . .

And we made a jovial night of it. Cap'n Jack would not let me off his knee. Not he! He held me close and kindly; and while he yarned of the passage to my uncle, and interjected strange wishes for a wife, he whispered many things in my ear to delight me, and promised me, upon his word, a sailing from St. John's to Spanish ports, when I was grown old enough, if only I would come in that basket of a *Lost Hope*, which I maintained I never would do. 'Twas what my uncle was used to calling a lovely time; and, as for me, I wish I were a child again, and Cap'n Jack were come in from the rain, and my uncle tipping the bottle of Long Tom (though 'twere a scandal). Ay, indeed I do! That I were a child again, used to tap-room bottles, and that big Cap'n Jack had come in from the gale to tell me I was a brave lad in whom he found a comfort neither of the solid land nor of water-side companionship. But I did not think of Cap'n Jack that night, when my uncle had stowed me away in my bed at the hotel; but, rather, in the long, wakeful hours, through which I lay alone, I thought of Tom Bull's question, "Where'd ye get them jools?"

I had never before been troubled—not once; al-

ways I had worn the glittering stones without question.

"Where'd ye get them jools?"

I could not fall asleep: I repeated the twenty-third psalm, according to my teaching; but still I could not fall asleep. . . .

III

THE CATECHISM AT TWIST TICKLE

OF an evening at Twist Tickle Nicholas Top would sit unstrung and wistful in his great chair by the west window, with the curtains drawn wide, there waiting, in deepening gloom and fear, for the last light to leave the world. With his head fallen upon his breast and his eyes grown fixed and tragical with far-off gazing, he would look out upon the appalling sweep of sea and rock and sky, where the sombre wonder of the dusk was working more terribly than with thunder: clouds in embers, cliffs and mist and tumbling water turning to shadows, vanishing, as though they were not. In the place of a shining world, spread familiar and open, from its paths to the golden haze of its uttermost parts, there would come the cloud and mystery and straying noises of the night, wherein lurk and peer and restlessly move whatsoever may see in the dark.

Thus would he sit oppressed while night covered the world he knew by day. And there would come up from the sea its voice; and the sea has no voice, but mysteriously touches the strings within the soul of

a man, so that the soul speaks in its own way, each soul lifting its peculiar message. For me 'twas sweet to watch the tender shadows creep upon the western fire, to see the great gray rocks dissolve, to hear the sea's melodious whispering; but to him (it seemed) the sea spoke harshly and the night came with foreboding. In the silence and failing light of the hour, looking upon the stupendous works of the Lord, he would repeat the words of the prophet of the Lord: "*For behold the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with the flames of fire.*" And again, with his hand upon his forehead and his brows fallen hopelessly, "*With his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with the flames of fire.*" Still repeating the awful words, his voice broken to a terrified whisper, "*His rebuke with the flames of fire!*" And in particular moods, when the prophets, however sonorous, were inadequate to his need, my uncle would have recourse to his own pithy vocabulary for terms with which to anathematize himself; but these, of course, may not be written in a book.

When the dusk was come my uncle would turn blithely from this melancholy contemplation and call for a lamp and his bottle. While I was about this business (our maid-servant would not handle the bottle lest she be damned for it), my uncle would stump the floor, making gallant efforts to whistle and trill: by this exhorting himself to a cheerful mood, so that when

I had moved his great chair to the table, with the lamp near and turned high, and had placed a stool for his wooden leg, and had set his bottle and glass and little brown jug of cold water conveniently at hand, his face would be pleasantly rippling and his eyes all a-twinkle.

"Up with un, Dannie!" says he.

'Twas his fancy that he had gout in the tip of his wooden leg. I must lift the ailing bit of timber to the stool with caution.

"Ouch!" groans he. "Easy, lad!"

'Twas now in place.

"All ship-shape an' cheerful," says he. "Pass the bottle."

He would then stand me up for catechism; and to this task I would come with alacrity, and my heels would come together, and my shoulders square, and my hands go behind my back, as in the line at school. 'Twas a solemn game, whatever the form it took, whether dealing with my possessions, hopes, deportment, or what-not; and however grotesque an appearance the thing may wear, 'twas done in earnest by us both and with some real pains (when I was stupid or sleepy) to me. 'Twas the way he had, too, of teaching me that which he would have me conceive him to be—of fashioning in my heart and mind the character he would there wear. A clumsy, forecastle method, and most pathetically engaging, to be sure! but in effect unapproached: for to this day, when I know him as he was, the man he would appear to be sticks in my heart and will not be supplanted. Nor would I will-

ingly yield the wistful old dog's place to a gentleman of more brilliant parts.

"Dannie, lad," he would begin, in the manner of a visiting trustee, but yet with a little twitch and flush of embarrassment, which must be wiped away with his great bandanna handkerchief—"Dannie, lad," he would begin, "is ol' Nicholas Top a well-knowed figger in Newf'un'land?"

"He's knowed," was the response I had been taught, "from Cape Race t' Chidley."

"What for?"

"Standin' by."

So far so good; my uncle would beam upon me, as though the compliment were of my own devising, until 'twas necessary once more to wipe the smile and blush from his great wet countenance.

"Is it righteous," says he, "t' stand by?"

"'Tis that."

He would now lean close with his poser: "Does it say so in the Bible? Ah ha, lad! Does it say so *there?*"

"'Twas left out," says I, having to this been scandalously taught, "by mistake!"

'Twas my uncle's sad habit thus to solve his ethical difficulties. To a gigantic, thumb-worn Bible he would turn, the which, having sought with unsuccess until his temper was hot, he would fling back to its place, growling: "Them ol' prophets was dunderheads, anyhow; they left out more'n they put in. Why, Dannie," in vast disgust, "you don't find the mention of barratry

from jib-boom t' taffrail! An' you mean t' set there an' tell me them prophets didn't make no mistake? No, sir! I 'low they was well rope's-ended for neglect o' dooty when the Skipper cotched un in the other Harbor." But if by chance, in his impatient haste, he stumbled upon some confirmation of his own philosophy, he would crow: "There you got it, Dannie! Right under the thumb o' me! Them ol' bullies was wise as owls." 'Twas largely a matter of words, no doubt (my uncle being self-taught in all things); and 'tis possible that the virtue of standing by, indirectly commended, to be sure, is not specifically and in terms enjoined upon the righteous. However—

"Come, now!" says my uncle; "would you say that ol' Nicholas Top was *famous* for standin' by?"

'Twas hard to remember the long response. "Well," I must begin, in a doubtful drawl, every word and changing inflection his own, as I had been taught, "I wouldn't go *quite* t' the length o' that. Ol' Nicholas Top wouldn't claim it hisself. Ol' Nicholas Top on'y claims that he's *good* at standin' by. His cronies do 'low that he can't be beat at it by ar a man in Newf'un'-land; but Nicholas wouldn't go t' the length o' *sayin'* so hisself. 'Ol' Nick,' says they, 'would stand by if the ship was skippered by the devil and inbound on a fiery wind t' the tickle t' hell. Whatever Nick says he'll *do*,' says they, 'is all the same as *did;* an' if he says he'll stand by, he'll stick, blow high or blow low, fog, ice, or reefs. "Be jiggered t' port an' weather!"

says he.'[1] But sure," I must conclude, "ol' Nicholas wouldn't say so hisself. An' so I wouldn't go t' the length o' holdin' that he was famous for standin' by. Take it by an' all, if I was wantin' sea room, I'd stick t' *well knowed* an' be done with it."

"Co'-rect!" says my uncle, with a smack of satisfaction. "You got that long one right, Dannie. An' now, lad," says he, his voice turning soft and genuine in feeling, "what's the ol' sailorman tryin' t' make out o' *you?*"

"A gentleman."

"An' why?"

Then this disquieting response:

"'Tis none o' my business."

'Twould have been logical had he asked me: "An', Dannie, lad, what's a gentleman?" But this he never did; and I think, regarding the thing from this distance, that he was himself unable to frame the definition, so that, of course, I never could be taught it. But he was diligent in pursuit of this knowledge; he sat with open ears in those exclusive tap-rooms where "the big bugs t' St. John's" (as he called them) congregated; indeed, the little gold watch by which Skipper Tom Bull's suspicion had been excited at the Anchor and Chain came to me immediately after the

[1] 'Twas really "damned t' port an' weather" my uncle would have me say; but I hesitate to set it down, lest the more gentle readers of my simple narrative think ill of the man's dealings with a child, which I would not have them do.

Commissioner of This had remarked to the Commissioner of That, within my uncle's hearing—this at the Gold Bullet over a bottle of Long Tom—that a watch of modest proportions was the watch for a gentleman to wear (my other watches had been chosen with an opposite idea). And my uncle, too (of which anon), held in high regard that somewhat questionable light of morality and deportment whom he was used to calling ol' Skipper Chesterfield. But "What is a gentleman?" was omitted from my catechism.

"An' is this ol' Nicholas Top a liar?" says my uncle.

"No, sir."

"Is he a thief?"

"No, sir."

"Smuggler?"

"No, sir."

"Have he ever been mixed up in burglary, murder, arson, barratry, piracy, fish stealin', or speckalation?"

"No, sir."

To indicate his utter detachment from personal interest in the question to follow, my uncle would wave his dilapidated hand, as though leaving me free to answer as I would, which by no means was I.

"An' of how much," says he, "would he rob his neighbor that he might prosper?"

'Twas now time for me to turn loud and indignant, as I had been taught. Thus: my head must shoot out in truculent fashion, my brows bend, my lips curl away from my teeth like a snarling dog's, my eyes glare; and I must let my small body shake with explosive

rage, in imitation of my uncle, while I brought the table a thwack with all my force, shouting:

"Not a damn copper!"

"Good!" says my uncle, placidly. "You done that very well, Dannie, for a lad. You fetched out the damn quite noisy an' agreeable. Now," says he, "is Nicholas Top a rascal?"

'Twas here we had trouble; in the beginning, when this learning was undertaken, I must be whipped to answer as he would have me. Ay, and many a night have I gone sore to bed for my perversity, for in respect to obedience his severity was unmitigated, as with all seafaring men. But I might stand obstinate for a moment—a moment of grace. And upon the wall behind his chair, hanging in the dimmer light, was a colored print portraying a blue sea, spread with rank upon rank of accurately measured waves, each with its tiny cap of foam, stretching without diminution to the horizon, upon which was perched a full-rigged ship, a geometrical triumph; and from this vessel came by small-boat to the strand a company of accurately moulded, accurately featured, accurately tailored fellows, pulling with perfect accuracy in every respect. I shall never forget the geometrical gentleman upon that geometrically tempestuous sea, for as I stood sullen before my uncle they provided the only distraction at hand.

"Come, Daniel!" says he, in a little flare of wrath; "is he a rascal?"

"Well," says I, defiantly, "I've heard un lied about."

"Wrong!" roars my uncle. "Try again, sir! Is ol' Nicholas Top a rascal?"

There was no help for it. I must say the unkind words or be thrashed for an obstinate whelp.

"A damned rascal, sir!" says I.

"Co'-*rect!*" cries my uncle, delighted.[1]

And now, presently, my uncle would drawl, "Well, Dannie, lad, you might 's well measure out the other," and when I had with care poured his last dram would send me off to bed. Sometimes he would have me say my prayers at his knee—not often—most when high winds, without rain, shook our windows and sang mournfully past the cottage, and he was unnerved by the night. "The wind's high the night," says he, with an anxious frown; "an' Dannie," says he, laying a hand upon my head, "you might 's well overhaul that there

> "'*Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me,*
> *Bless Thy little lamb to-night,*'

[1] Of course, the frequent recurrence of this vulgarity in my narrative is to be regretted. No one, indeed, is more sensible of the circumstance than I. My uncle held the word in affectionate regard, and usefully employed it: 'tis the only apology I have to offer. Would it not be possible for the more delicate readers of my otherwise inoffensive narrative to elide the word? or to supply, on the spur of the moment, an acceptable equivalent, of which, I am told, there is an infinite variety? or (better still) to utter it courageously? I am for the bolder course: 'tis a discipline rich in cultural advantages. But 'tis for the reader, of course, to choose the alternative.

afore you turns in. 'Twill do you good, an' 'twon't manage t' do me no harm." And this done I would off to bed; but had no sooner bade him good-night, got my gruff response, and come to the foot of the stair, than, turning to say good-night again, I would find myself forgot. My uncle would be sunk dejectedly in his great chair, his scarred face drawn and woful. I see him now — under the lamp — a gray, monstrous, despairing man, a bottle beside him, the familiar things of the place in shadow. The old feeling of wonder and regret returns. I sigh—as then, a child, bound up to a lonely chamber in the night, I sighed.

"Good-night, sir!"

There was no response; but he would look in upon me on the way to bed — into the little room where I lay luxuriously, in the midst of those extravagant comforts which so strangely came to me. And more often than not he would haul this way and that upon the covers until, as though by some unhappy accident, I was awakened.

"God bless you, Dannie," says he.

"Good-night, sir."

'Twas all he wanted—a good wish spoken in the night. To his own bare room he would then be off, a bit uncertain (I recall) in the management of his wooden leg.

Under my window, at the foot of a short cliff which fell roughly into the open cove, as shall be told, the

sea broke. While sleep waited 'twas my habit to listen to the waves upon the rocks: in that brief and mystical interval when many truths take shape, definite and lovely, as in a mist, but are forgot before dawn stirs us, nor can be remembered. Of still moonlit nights; of windless dusks, with the swell of past storms sullenly remaining; in clammy, breathless weather; with fresh winds blowing our craft to and fro on their way in search of the fish; in blackest gales, when the men of Twist Tickle kept watch for wrecks upon the heads—forever I listened to the voice of the sea before I fell asleep. But the sea has no voice, but may only play upon the souls of men, which speak from the uttermost depths, each soul in its own way: so that the sea has a thousand voices, and listening men are tranquil or not, as may chance within them, without mystery. Never since those far-off days, when the sea took my unspoiled soul as a harp in its hands, have I been secure in the knowledge of truth, untroubled by bewilderment and anxious questions. Untroubled by love, by the fear of hell, 'twas good to be alive in a world where the sea spoke tenderly below the window of the room where sleep came bearing dreams.

And my uncle? God knows! The harp was warped, and the strings of the harp were broken and out of tune. . . .

IV

ON SINISTER BUSINESS

OUR pilgrimages to St. John's, occurring twice a year, were of a singular description: not only in the manner of our progress, which was unexampled, in view of our relationship and condition, but in the impenetrable character of our mission and in the air of low rascality it unfailingly wore. For many days before our departure from Twist Tickle by the outside boat, my uncle would quit the Green Bull grounds, where he fished with hook and line, would moor his punt fore and aft, and take to the bleak hills of Twin Islands, there (it seemed) to nurse some questionable design: whence at dusk he would emerge, exhausted in leg and spirit, but yet with strength to mutter obscure imprecations as he came tapping up the gravelled walk from the gate, and with the will to manage a bottle and glass in the kitchen.

"The bottle!" cries he. "Ecod! the dog 'll never scare ol' Nick Top. Dannie, the bottle!"

While I fled for this he would sit growling by the table; but before I was well returned the humor would be vanishing, so that sometimes I guessed (but might

be mistaken) he practised this rage and profanity to play a part.

"Ol' Nick Top," says he, "is as saucy a dog as you'll find in the pack!"

'Twas said with a snap.

"A saucy ol' dog!" snarls he. "An' Lord love ye! but he's able t'—t'—t' *bite!*"

"Uncle Nick," says I, "you're all wore out along o' walkin' them hills."

"Wore out!" cries he, an angry flash in his wide little eyes. "*Me* wore out? . . . Pass the bottle. . . . Ye'd never think it, lad, an ye could see me t' St. John's," says he, "at the—"

The revelation came to a full stop with the tipping of the square black bottle.

"Where's that?" says I.

"'Tis a wee water-side place, lad," says he, with a grave wink, "where ol' Nick Top 's the sauciest dog in the pack!"

I would pass the water for his liquor.

"An' here," cries he, toasting with solemn enthusiasm, "is wishin' all water-side rascals in"—'twas now a long pull at the glass—"jail!" says he. "'Twould go agin my conscience t' wish un worse. I really isn't able!"

By these wanderings on the hills the slow, suspicious wits of our folk of Twist Tickle were mystified and aroused to superstitious imaginings. 'Twas inevitable that they should pry and surmise—surmising much more than they dared pry. They were never bold, however, in the presence of my uncle, whether because

of their courteous ways or because of his quick temper and sulphurous tongue, in respect to meddling, I am not able to say; but no doubt they would have troubled us a deal had my uncle even so much as admitted by the set of his eyelid (which he never would do) that there was a mystery concerning us. The lads of the place lurked upon the hills when the business went forward, continuing in desperate terror of my uncle at such times. They learned, notwithstanding their fright, that he trudged far and hard, at first smiling with the day, then muttering darkly, at last wrathfully swishing the spruce with his staff; but not one of them could follow to the discovery of the secret, whatever it might be, so that, though 'twas known the old man exchanged a genial humor for an execrable one, the why and wherefore were never honestly fathomed.

Came, at last, the day before our departure, upon which my wardrobe for the journey must be chosen from the closets and chests, inspected, scrupulously packed—this for travel, that for afternoon, this, again, for dinner—tweed and serge and velvet: raiment for all occasions, for all weathers, as though, indeed, I were to spend time with the governor of the colony. Trinkets and cravats presented pretty questions for argument, in which my uncle delighted, and would sustain with spirit, watching rather wistfully, I recall, to see my interest wax; and my interest would sometimes wax too suddenly for belief, inspired by his melancholy disappointment, so that he would dig me

in the ribs with his long forefinger and laugh at me because he had discovered my deception. My uncle was a nice observer (and diligent) of fashion, and a stickler for congruity of dress, save in the matter of rings and the like, with which, perhaps, he was in the way of too largely adorning me.

"Ye'll be wearin' the new Turkish outfit aboard ship, Dannie?" says he.

I would not.

"Lon'on *Haberdasher* come out strong," says he, at a coax, "on Turkish outfits for seven-year-olds."

'Twas not persuasive.

"Wonderful pop'lar across the water."

"But," I would protest, "I'm not likin' the queer red cap."

"Ah, Dannie," says he, "I fears ye'll never be much of a gentleman if ye're careless o' the fashion. Not in the fashion, out o' the world! What have ol' Skipper Chesterfield t' say on that p'int? Eh, lad? What have the bully ol' skipper t' say—underlined by Sir Harry? A list o' the ornamental accomplishments, volume II., page 24. 'T' be extremely clean in your person,' says he, 'an' perfeckly well dressed, accordin' t' the fashion, be that what it will.' There you haves it, lad, underlined by Sir Harry! '*Be that what it will.*' But ye're not likin' the queer red cap, eh? Ah, well! I 'low, then, ye'll be havin' t' don the kilt."

This I would hear with relief.

"But I 'low," growls he, "that Sir Harry an' Skipper

Chesterfield haves the right of it: for they're both strong on manners—if weak on morals."

Aboard ship I was put in the cabin and commanded to bear myself like a gentleman: whereupon I was abandoned, my uncle retreating in haste and purple confusion from the plush and polish and glitter of the state-room. But he would never fail to turn at the door (or come stumping back through the passage); and now heavily oppressed by my helplessness and miserable loneliness and the regrettable circumstances of my life—feeling, it may be, some fear for me and doubt of his own wisdom—he would regard me anxiously. To this day he lingers thus in my memory: leaning forward upon his short staff, half within the bright light, half lost in shadow, upon his poor, fantastic, strangely gentle countenance an expression of tenderest solicitude, which still would break, against his will, in ripples of the liveliest admiration at my appearance and luxurious situation, but would quickly recover its quality of concern and sympathy.

"Dannie, lad," he would prescribe, "you better overhaul the twenty-third psa'm afore turnin' in."

To this I would promise.

"'The Lard is my shepherd,'" says he. "'I shall not want.' Say it twice," says he, as if two doses were more salutary than one, "an' you'll feel better in the mornin'."

To this a doleful assent.

"An' ye'll make good use o' your time with the gentlefolk, Dannie?" says he. "Keep watch on 'em,

lad, an' ye'll l'arn a wonderful lot about manners. 'List o' the necessary ornamental accomplishments (without which no man livin' can either please or rise in the world), which hitherto I fear ye want,'" quotes he, most glibly, "'an' which only require your care an' attention t' possess.' Volume II., page 24. 'A distinguished politeness o' manners an' address, which common-sense, observation, good company, an' imitation will give ye if ye will accept it.' There you haves it, Dannie—underlined by Sir Harry! Ye got the sense, ye got the eye, an' here's the company. Lord love ye, Dannie, the Commissioner o' Lands is aboard with his lady! No less! An' I've heared tell of a Yankee millionaire cruisin' these parts. They'll be wonderful handy for practice. Lay alongside, Dannie—an' imitate the distinguished politeness: for ol' Skipper Chesterfield cracks up imitation an' practice most wonderful high!"

The jangle of the bell in the engine-room would now interrupt him. The mail was aboard: the ship bound out.

"An' Dannie," says my uncle, feeling in haste for the great handkerchief (to blow his nose, you may be sure), "I'm not able t' *think* o' you bein' lonely. I'm for'ard in the steerage, lad—just call that t' mind. An' if ye find no cure in that, why, lad"—in a squall of affectionate feeling, his regard for gentility quite vanished—"sink me an' that damn ol' Chesterfield overside, an' overhaul the twenty-third psa'm!"

"Ay, sir."

"You is safe enough, lad; for, Dannie—"

'Twas in the imperative tone, and I must instantly and sharply attend.

—"I'm for'ard, standin' by!"

He would then take himself off to the steerage for good; and 'twas desperately lonely for me, aboard the big ship, tossing by night and day through the rough waters of our coast.

V

TAP-TAP ON THE PAVEMENT

MY uncle would not have speech with me again, lest his rough look and ways endanger the social advantages he conceived me to enjoy in the cabin, but from the lower deck would keep sly watch upon me, and, unobserved of others, would with the red bandanna handkerchief flash me messages of affection and encouragement, to which I must not for the life of me respond. Soon, however, 'twas my turn to peer and wish; for, perceiving at last that I was not ill (the weather being fair), and that I had engaged the companionship of gentlefolk — they were quick enough, indeed, these St. John's folk and spying wanderers, to attach themselves to the mystery of old Nick Top's child—my uncle would devote himself to his own concerns with unhappy result.

The manner of his days of preparation upon the hills of Twin Islands would return: the ill temper and cunning and evil secretiveness, joined now with the hang-dog air he habitually wore in the city. And these distressful appearances would by day and night increase, as we passed the Funks, came to Bonavist' Bay, left

the Bacalieu light behind and rounded the Brandy Rocks, until, instead of a rotund, twinkling old sea-dog, with a gargoylish countenance, with which the spirit had nothing to do, there landed on the wharf at the city a swaggering, wrathy pirate, of devilish cast and temper, quick to flush and bluster, mighty in profanity, far gone in drink.

Thence to the hotel, in this wise: my uncle, being clever with his staff and wooden leg and vastly strong, would shoulder my box, make way through the gang-plank idlers and porters with great words, put me grandly in the lead, come gasping at a respectful distance behind, modelling his behavior (as he thought) after that of some flunky of nobility he had once clapped eyes on; and as we thus proceeded up the hill—a dandy in tartan kilt and velvet and a gray ape in slops—he would have a quick word of wrath for any passenger that might chance to jostle me. 'Twas a conspicuous progress, craftily designed, as, long afterwards, I learned; we were not long landed, you may be sure, before the town was aware that the mystery of Twist Tickle was once more come in by the *Lake:* old Skipper Nicholas Top and the lad with the rings, as they called me!

Having come now to the hotel (this by night), where would be a cheerful fire awaiting us in my comfortable quarters, my uncle would unstrap my box and dispose its contents in clean and handy places, urging me the while, like a mother, to make good use of my oppor-

tunity to observe the ways of gentlefolk, especially as practised in the dining-room of the hotel, that I might expeditiously master polite manners, which was a thing Skipper Chesterfield held most seriously in high opinion. I must thus conduct myself (he said), rather than idly brood, wishing for his company: for a silk purse was never yet made of a sow's ear but with pain to all concerned. "An' Dannie," says he, jovially, when he had clapped the last drawer shut and put my night-clothes to warm at the fire, "if you was t' tweak that there bell-pull—"

I would gladly tweak it.

"Thank 'e, Dannie," says my uncle, gently. "It 'll be the best Jamaica—a nip afore I goes."

In response to this would come old Elihu Wall, whom in private I loved, exaggerating every obsequious trick known to his kind to humor my uncle. I must then act my part, as I had been taught, thus: must stride to the fire, turn, spread my legs, scowl, meditatively ply a tooth-pick (alas! my groping uncle), become aware of old Elihu Wall, become haughtily conscious of my uncle, now in respectful attitude upon his foot and wooden leg; and I must scowl again, in a heavier way, as though angered by this interruption, and rub my small quarters, now heated near beyond endurance, and stare at the ceiling, and, dropping my eyes sharply upon Elihu Wall, say with a haughty sniff, a haughty curl of the lip:

"Elihu"—with a superior jerk towards my uncle—"fetch this man a dram o' your best Jamaica!"

'Twas not hard to do—not hard to learn: for my uncle was unceasing in solicitous and patient instruction, diligent in observation, as he cruised in those exclusive places to which (somehow) he gained admittance for my sake and a jolly welcome for his own. And 'twas a grateful task, too, to which I heartily gave my interest, for I loved my uncle. 'Twas his way of teaching me not only the gentlemanly art of dealing with menials, as he had observed it, but, on his part, as he stood stiff and grave, the proper attitude of a servant towards his master. In these days, long distant from the first strange years of my life, I am glad that I was not wilful with him—glad that I did not obstinately resist the folly and boredom of the thing, as I was inclined to do. But, indeed, it must not be counted to me for virtue; for my uncle had a ready hand, though three fingers were missing, and to this day I remember the odd red mark it left (the thumb, forefinger, and palm), when, upon occasion, it fell upon me.

"Elihu," says I, "fetch this man a dram o' your best Jamaica!"

Upon the disappearance of Elihu Wall, my uncle and I would resume intimate relations.

"You done well, Dannie!" cries he, gleefully rubbing his hands. "I never knowed Sir Harry t' do it better."

We were both mightily proud.

"Dannie," says he, presently, with gleeful interest, "give un a good one when he gets back. Like a gentleman, Dannie. Just t' show un what you can do."

Enter Elihu Wall.

"What the devil d'ye mean?" says I, in wrath. "Eh? What the devil d'ye mean?"

"Yes, sir," says Elihu Wall. "Sorry, sir. *Very*, sir."

"Devil take your sorrow!" says I.

I would then slip the old fellow a bit of silver, as I was bidden, and he would obsequiously depart.[1]

"You done well, Dannie!" cries my uncle again, in delight. "Lord! but 'twas grand! You done wonderful well! I never knowed Sir Harry t' do it better. I wisht ol' Chesterfield was here t' see. Ecod!" he chuckles, with a rub at his nose, gazing upon me with affectionate admiration, in which was no small dash of awe, "you done it well, my lad! I've heard Sir Harry say *more*, mark you! but I've never knowed un t' do it better. *More*, Dannie, but t' less purpose. Ah, Dannie," says he, fondly, "they's the makin's of a gentleman in *you!*"

I was pleased—to be sure!

"An' I 'low, by an' all," my uncle would boast, scratching his head in high gratification, "that I'm a-fetchin' ye up very well!"

'Twas hard on old Elihu Wall—this unearned abuse. But Elihu and I were fast friends, nevertheless: he sped many a wearisome hour for me when my uncle was upon his grim, mysterious business in the city;

[1] My uncle would instantly have thrashed me had I approached an oath (or any other vulgarity) in conversation upon ordinary occasions.

and I had long ago told him that he must not grieve, whatever I said—however caustic and unkind the words—because my uncle's whims must be humored, which was the end to be served by us both. With this assurance of good feeling, old Elihu Wall was content. He took my insolence in good part, playing the game cheerfully: knowing that the hard words were uttered without intention to wound, but only in imitation of gentlemen, from whom Elihu Wall suffered enough, Heaven knows! (as he confided to me) not to mind what I might say.

I must tell that, once, taken with pain, having overeaten myself, left alone in the hotel at St. John's, I got out of bed and sought my uncle's lodgings, which I was never permitted to see. 'Twas a rough search for a sick child to follow through in the night, ending by the water-side—a dismal stair, leading brokenly to a wretched room, situate over a tap-room too low for frequency by us, where women quarrelled with men. Here my uncle sat with his bottle, not yet turned in. He was amazed when I entered, but scolded me not at all; and he gave me brandy to drink, until my head swam, and took me to sleep with him, for the only time in all my life. When I awoke 'twas to disgust with the bed and room in which I lay—with the smell and dirt of the place—the poverty and sordidness, to which I was not used.

I complained of the housing my uncle had.

"Dannie, lad," says my uncle, sighing unhappily, "the old man's poor, an' isn't able t' help it."

Still I complained.

"Don't, Dannie!" says he. "I isn't able t' bear it. An' I'm wishin' you'd never found out. The old man's poor—wonderful poor. He's on'y a hook-an'-line man. For God's sake ask un no questions!"

I asked him no questions. . . .

Every morning while at St. John's, my uncle and I must walk the lower streets: my hand in his, when I was a child, and, presently, when I was grown into a lad, myself at his heels. Upon these occasions I must be clad and conduct myself thus and so, with utmost particularity: must be combed and brushed, and carry my head bravely, and square my shoulders, and turn out my toes, and cap my crown so that my unspeakably wilful hair, which was never clipped short, as I would have it, would appear in disarray. Never once did I pass the anxious inspection without needing a whisk behind, or, it may be, here and there, a touch of my uncle's thick finger, which seemed, somehow, infinitely tender at that moment.

"I'm wantin' ye, Dannie," says he, "t' look like a gentleman the day. They'll be a thing come t' pass, come a day."

There invariably came a thing to pass—a singular thing, which I conceived to be the object of these pilgrimages; being this: that when in the course of our peregrinations we came to the crossing of King

Street with Water he would never fail to pause, tap-tap a particular stone of the walk, and break into muttered imprecations, continuing until folk stared and heads were put out of the windows. In so far as one might discern, there was nothing in that busy neighborhood to excite the ill-temper of any man; but at such times, as though courting the curious remark he attracted, my uncle's staff would strike the pavement with an angry pat, his head wag and nod, his eyes malevolently flash, and he would then so hasten his steps that 'twas no easy matter to keep pace with him, until, once past, he would again turn placid and slow.

"There you haves it, Dannie!" he would chuckle. "There you haves it!"

'Twas all a mystery.

My uncle must once get very drunk at St. John's—this for a day and a night, during which I must not leave my quarters. These were times of terror—and of loneliness: for it seemed to my childish mind that when my uncle was drunk I had no friend at all. But 'twas all plain sailing afterwards—a sober, cheerful guardian, restless to be off to Twist Tickle. My uncle would buy new outfits for me at the shops, arrange the regular shipment of such delicacies as the St. John's markets afforded according to the season, seek gifts with which to delight and profit me, gather the news of fashion, lie in wait for dropped hints as to the manners and customs of gentlemen, procure his allowance

of whiskey for the six months to come: in every way providing for my happiness and well-being and for such meagre comfort as he would allow himself.

Then off to Twist Tickle: and glad we were of it when the *Lake* got beyond the narrows and the big, clean, clear-aired sea lay ahead!

VI

THE FEET OF CHILDREN

ONCE of a still night at Twist Tickle (when I was grown to be eleven) my uncle abandoned his bottle and came betimes to my room to make sure that I was snug in my sleep. 'Twas fall weather without, the first chill and frosty menace of winter abroad: clear, windless, with all the stars that ever shone a-twinkle in the far velvet depths of the sky beyond the low window of my room. I had drawn wide the curtains to let the companionable lights come in: to stare, too, into the vast pool of shadows, which was the sea, unquiet and sombre beneath the serenity and twinkling splendor of the night. Thus I lay awake, high on the pillows, tucked to my chin: but feigned a restful slumber when I caught the sigh and downcast tread of his coming.

"Dannie," he whispered, "is you awake?"

I made no answer.

"Ah, Dannie, isn't you?"

Still I would not heed him.

"I wisht you was," he sighed, "for I'm wonderful lonely the night, lad, an' wantin' t' talk a spell."

'Twas like a child's beseeching. I was awake at once—wide awake for him: moved by the wistfulness of this appeal to some perception of his need.

"An' is you comfortable, Dannie, lyin' there in your own little bed?"

"Ay, sir."

"An' happy?"

"Grand, sir!" said I.

He crept softly to my bed. "You don't mind?" he whispered. I drew my feet away to make room. He sat down, and for a moment patted me with the tenderness of a woman. "You don't mind?" he ventured again, in diffidence. I did not mind (but would not tell him so); nay, so far was I from any objection that I glowed with content in this assurance of loving protection from the ills of the world. "No?" said he. "I'm glad o' that: for I'm so wonderful old an' lonely, an' you're sort o' all I got, Dannie, t' fondle. 'Tis pleasant t' touch a thing that's young an' not yet smirched by sin an' trouble. 'Tis some sort o' cure for the souls o' broken folk, I'm thinkin'. An' you don't mind? I'm glad o' that. You're gettin' so wonderful old yourself, Dannie, that I was a bit afeared. A baby yesterday an' a man the morrow! You're near growed up. 'Leven year old!" with a wry smile, in which was no pride, but only poignant regret. "You're near growed up." Presently he withdrew a little. "Ay," said he, gently; "you is housed an' clad an' fed. So much I've managed well enough." He paused —distraught, his brows bent, his hand passing aim-

lessly over the scars and gray stubble of his head. "You're happy, Dannie?" he asked, looking up. "Come, now, is you sure? You'd not be makin' game o' the old man, would you, Dannie? You'd not tell un you *was* when you *wasn't*, would you? Is you sure you're happy? An' you're glad, is you, t' be livin' all alone at Twist Tickle with a ol' feller like Nick Top?"

"Wonderful happy, sir," I answered, used to the question, free and prompt in response; "happy, sir—with you."

"An' you is sure?"

I was sure.

"I'm glad o' that," he continued, but with no relief of the anxious gloom upon his face. "I'm glad you is comfortable an' happy. I 'low," said he, "that poor Tom Callaway would like t' get word of it. Poor Tom! Poor ol' Tom! Lord love you, lad! he was your father: an' he loved you well—all too well. I 'low he'd be wonderful *glad* just t' know that you was comfortable an' happy—an' good. You *is* good, isn't you? Oh, I knows you is! An' I wisht Tom Callaway could know. I wisht he could: for I 'low 'twould perk un up a bit, in the place he's to, t' get wind of it that his little Dannie was happy with ol' Nick Top. He've a good deal t' bear, I'm thinkin', where he's to; an' 'twould give un something t' distract his mind if he knowed you was doin' well. But, Dannie, lad," he pursued, with a lively little flash of interest, "they's a queer thing about that. Now, lad, mark you! 'tis easy enough t' send

messages Aloft; but when it comes t' gettin' a line or two o' comfort t' the poor damned folk Below, they's no mortal way that I ever heared tell on. Prayer," says he, "wings aloft, far beyond the stars, t' the ear o' God Hisself; an' I wisht—oh, I wisht—they was the same sort o' telegraph wire t' hell! For," said he, sadly, "I've got some news that I'd kind o' like t' send."

I could not help him.

"I'm *tired!*" he complained, with a quick-drawn sigh. "I'm all wore out; an' I wisht I could tell Tom Callaway.

I, too, sighed.

"But I 'low," was my uncle's woe-begone conclusion, "that that there poor ol' Tom Callaway 'll just have t' wait till I sees un."

'Twas with a start of horror that I surmised the whereabouts of my father's soul.

We were but newly come from St. John's: a long sojourn in the water-side tap-rooms—a dissipation protracted beyond the habit (and will) of my uncle. I had wearied, and had wondered, but had found no explanation. There was a time when the rage and stagger of his intoxicated day had been exceeded past my remembrance and to my terror. I forgave him the terror: I did, I am sure! there was no fright or humiliation the maimed ape could put upon me but I would freely forgive, remembering his unfailing affection. 'Twas all plain now: the course of his rascality had not run smooth. I divined it; and I wished, I

recall, lying there in the light of the untroubled stars, that I might give of myself—of the ease and placid outlook he preserved for me—some help to his distress and melancholy. But I was a child: no more than a child—unwise, unhelpful, in a lad's way vaguely feeling the need of me from whom no service was due: having intuitive discernment, but no grown tact and wisdom. That he was scarred, two-fingered, wooden-legged, a servant of the bottle, was apart: and why not? for I was nourished by the ape that he was; and a child loves (this at least) him who, elsewhere however repugnant, fosters him. I could not help with any spoken word, but still could have him think 'twas grateful to me to have him sit with me while I fell asleep; and this I gladly did.

My uncle looked up. "Dannie," said he, "you don't mind me sittin' here for a spell on your little bed, do you? Honest, now?"

'Twas woful supplication: the voice a child's voice; the eyes—dimly visible in the starlight—a child's beseeching eyes.

"Jus' for a little spell?" he pleaded.

I said that I was glad to have him.

"An' you isn't so wonderful sleepy, is you?"

"No, sir," I yawned.

He sighed. "I'm glad," said he. "An' I'm grateful t' you, lad, for bein' kind t' ol' Nick Top. He ain't worth it, Dannie—*he's* no good; he's jus' a ol' fool. But I'm lonely the night—most wonderful lone-

ly. I been thinkin' I was sort o' makin' a mess o' things. You *is* happy, isn't you, Dannie?" he asked, in a flash of anxious mistrust. "An' comfortable—an' good? Ah, well! maybe: I'm glad you're thinkin' so. But I 'low I isn't much on fetchin' you up. I'm a wonderful poor hand at that. I 'low you're gettin' a bit beyond me. I been feelin' sort o' helpless an' scared; an' I was wishin' they was somebody t' lend a hand with the job. I overhauled ol' Chesterfield, Dannie, for comfort; but somehow I wasn't able t' put my finger on a wonderful lot o' passages t' tie to. He've *wonderful* good ideas on the subjeck o' manners, an' a raft of un, too; but the ideas he've got on souls, Dannie, is poor an' sort o' damned scarce. So when I sot down there with the bottle, I 'lowed that if I come up an' you give me leave t' sit on the side o' your little bed for a spell, maybe you wouldn't mind recitin' that there little piece you've fell into the habit o' usin' afore you goes t' bed. That wee thing about the Shepherd. You wouldn't mind, would you, just sort o' givin' it a light overhaulin' for me? I'd thank you, Dannie, an you would be so kind; an' I'll be as quiet as a mouse while you does it."

"The tender Shepherd?"

"Ay," said he; "the Shepherd o' the lambs."

"'*Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me;*
Bless thy little lamb to-night;
Through the darkness be Thou near me;
Keep me safe till morning light.

"'All this day Thy hand has led me,
And I thank Thee for Thy care;
Thou hast warmed me, clothed and fed me:
Listen to my evening prayer.

"'Let my sins be all forgiven;
Bless the friends I love so well;
Take us all at last to heaven,
Happy there with Thee to dwell.'"

And now the lower stars were paling in a far-off flush of light. I had been disquieted, but was by this waxing glow made glad that the sea and rock of the world were to lie uncovered of their shadows while yet I was awake. 'Twas a childish prayer—too simple in terms and petition (as some may think) for the lad that was I to utter, grown tall and broad and lusty for my years; but how sufficient (I recall) to still the fears of night! They who are grown lads, like the lad that was I, got somewhat beyond the years of tenderness, cling within their hearts to all the lost privileges of love they must by tradition affect to despise. My prayer for the little lamb that was I presented no aspect of incongruity to my uncle; it left him silent and solemnly abstracted: the man being cast into a heavy muse upon its content, his head fallen over his breast, as was his habit, and his great gray brows drawn down. How still the night —how cold and clear: how unfeeling in this frosty calm and silence, save, afar, where the little stars winked their kindly cognizance of the wakeful dwellers

of the earth! I sat up in my bed, peering through the window, to catch the first glint of the moon and to watch her rise dripping, as I used to fancy, from the depths of the sea.

"But they stray!" my uncle complained.

'Twas an utterance most strange. "Uncle Nick," I asked, "what is it that strays?"

"The feet o' children," he answered.

By this I was troubled.

"They stray," he repeated. "Ay; 'tis as though the Shepherd minded not at all."

"Will my feet stray?"

He would not answer: and then all at once I was appalled—who had not feared before.

"Tell me!" I demanded.

He reached out and touched my hand—a fleeting, diffident touch—and gently answered, "Ay, lad; your feet will stray."

"No, no!" I cried.

"The feet of all children," said he. "'Tis the way o' the world. They isn't mothers' prayers enough in all the world t' change the Shepherd's will. He's wise—the Shepherd o' the lambs."

"'Tis sad, then," I expostulated, "that the Shepherd haves it so."

"Sad?"

"Ay—wondrous sad."

"I'm not able t' think 'tis sad," said he. "'Tis wise, Dannie, I'm thinkin', t' have the lads wander in strange paths. I'd not have un suffer fear an' sorrow, God

knows! not one poor lad of all the lads that ever was. I'd suffer for their sins meself an' leave un go scot free. Not one but I'd be glad t' do it for. But still 'tis wise, I'm thinkin', that they should wander an' learn for theirselves the trouble o' false ways. I wisht," he added, simply, "that they was another plan—some plan t' save un sorrow while yet it made un men. But *I* can't think o' none."

"But an they're lost?"

He scratched his head in a rush of anxious bewilderment. "Why, Dannie," cries he, "it cannot be! Lost? Some poor wee lads lost? *You* lost, Dannie? My God! *You*, Dannie—you that lies there tender an' kind an' clean o' soul in your little bed? You that said the little prayer t' the tender Shepherd? *You* lost! God! it *could* not be. What's this you're tellin' me? I'm not able t' blaspheme the Lord God A'mighty in a way that's vile as that. Not you, lad—not you! Am I t' curse the God that would have it so?" cries he, in wrath. "Am I t' touch your young body here in the solemn night, am I t' look into your unspoiled eyes by day, an' feel that you fare into the dark alone, a child, an' without hope? *Me* think that? Ol' Nick Top? Not I! Sin? Ay; *you'll* sin. God knows so well as I you'll sin. He made you, lad, an' knows full well. You'll be sore hurt, child. For all he learns o' righteousness, Dannie, a man suffers; an' for all he learns o' sin he pays in kind: 'tis all the same—he learns o' good an' evil an' pays in the same coin o' sorrow. I'm not wishin' you sorrow: I'm wishin' you

manhood. You'll wander, like all lads, as God knows, who made un an' the world they walks in; but the Shepherd will surely follow an' fetch home all them that stray away upon hurtful roads accordin' t' the will He works upon the sons o' men. They's no bog o' sin in all the world He knows not of. He'll seek the poor lads out, in patience an' love; an' He'll cure all the wounds the world has dealt un in dark places, however old an' bleared an' foul they've growed t' be, an' He'll make un clean again, rememberin' they was little lads, once—jus' like you. *Why, by God! Dannie,*" cried he, "*I'd do as much meself!*"

"Ay," quoth I; "but the parsons says they're lost for good an' all."

"Does they?" he asked, his eyes blank.

"'Deed so—an' often!"

"Ah, well, Dannie!" said he, "bein' cut off from the discussion o' parsons by misdeeds, I'm not able t' say. But bein' on'y a lost soul I'm 'lowed t' think; an' I've thunk a idea."

I wondered concerning it.

"Which is, speakin' free an' easy," said he, "that they lie!"

"'Twill be hard," I argued, "'t save un all."

"'Twould be a mean poor God," he replied, "that couldn't manage a little thing like that."

My uncle's soul, as I had been taught (and but a moment gone informed), was damned.

"Uncle Nick," I inquired, "will the Shepherd find you?"

"Me?" cries he.

"Ay," I persisted; "will he not seek till he finds you, too?"

"Hist!" he whispered. "I'm damned, Dannie, for good an' all."

"You?"

"Good Lord, yes!" said he, under his breath. "Hist! Certain sure, I is—damned t' hell for what I'm doin'."

At this distant day I know that what he did was all for me, but not on that moonlit night of my childhood.

"What's that?" said I.

"I'm damned for it, anyhow," he answered. "Say no more, Dannie."

I marvelled, but could make nothing of it at all. 'Tis strange (I have since thought) that we damn ourselves without hesitation: not one worthy man in all the world counting himself deserving of escape from those dreadful tortures preached for us by such apostles of injustice as find themselves, by the laws they have framed, interpreting without reverence or fear of blunder, free from the common judgment. Ay, we damn ourselves; but no man among us damns his friend, who is as evil as himself. And who damns his own child? 'Tis no doubt foolish to be vexed by any philosophy comprehending what is vulgarly called hell; but still (as I have thought) this is a reasonable view: there is no hell in the philosophy of a mother for her own child; and as by beneficent decree every man is the son of his mother, consequently there is no hell; else 'twould make such un-

happiness in heaven. Ah, well! I looked out of the window where were the great works of the Lord: His rock and sea and sky. The moon was there to surprise me—half risen: the sea shot with a glistening pathway to the glory of the night. And in that vast uncertain and inimical place, far out from shore, there rode a schooner of twenty tons, dawdling unafraid, her small sails spread for a breeze, in hope. Whither bound? Northward: an evil coast for sailing-craft—cruel waters: rock and fog and ice and tempestuous winds. Thither bound, undaunted, with wings wide, abroad in the teeth of many perils, come wreck or not. At least (I thought) she had ventured from snug harbor.

"Dannie," said my uncle, "you're all alone in the world."

Alone? Not I! "Why, sir," said I, "I've *you!*"

He looked away.

"Isn't I?" I demanded.

"No, lad," he answered; "you isn't."

'Twas the first step he had led me from dependence upon him. 'Twas as though he had loosened my hand a little from its confident clasp of his own. I was alarmed.

"Many's the lad," said he, "that thinks he've his mother; an' many's the mother that thinks she've her lad. But yet they is both alone—all alone. 'Tis the queerest thing in the world."

"But, Uncle Nick, I *haves* you!"

"No," he persisted; "you is all alone. Why, Lord! Dannie, you is 'leven. What does *I* know about *you?*"

Not enough.

"An' what does *you* know about *me?*"

I wondered.

"All children is alone," said he. "Their mothers doesn't think so; but they is. They're alone—all alone. They got t' walk alone. How am I t' help you, Dannie? What can I *do* for you? Of all the wisdom I've gathered I'd give you all an' go beggared, but you cannot take one jot. You must walk alone; 'tis the way o' the world. An', Dannie, could I say t' the evil that is abroad, 'Stand back! Make way! Leave this child o' mine t' walk in holiness!' I would not speak the word. 'Twould be hard t' stand helpless while you was sore beset. I'm not knowin' how I'd bear it. 'Twould hurt me, Dannie, God knows! But still I'd have you walk where sin walks. 'Tis a man's path, an' I'd have you take it, lad, like a man. I'd not have you come a milk-sop t' the Gate. I'd have you come scathless, an that might be with honor; but I'd have you come a man, scarred with a man's scars, an need be. You walk alone, Dannie, God help you! in the world God made: I've no knowledge o' your goings. You'll wander far on they small feet. God grant you may walk manfully wherever they stray. I've no more t' hope for than just only that."

"I'll try, sir," said I.

My uncle touched me again—moving nearer, now, that his hand might lie upon me. "Dannie," he whispered, "if you must sin the sins of us—"

"Ay, sir?"

"They'll be some poor folk t' suffer. An' Dannie—"

I was very grave in the pause.

"You'll not forget t' be kind, will you," he pleaded, "t' them that suffer for your sins?"

"I will not sin," I protested, "t' the hurt of any others."

He seemed not to hear. "An' you'll bear your own pain," he continued, "like a man, will you not?"

I would bear it like a man.

"That's good," said he. "That's very good!"

The moon was now risen from the sea: the room full of white light.

"They is a Shepherd," said my uncle. "God be thanked for that. *He'll* fetch you home."

"An' you?" said I.

"Me? Oh no!"

"He'll remember," said I, confidently, "that you was once a little lad—jus' like me."

"God knows!" said he.

I was then bade go to sleep. . . .

Presently I fell asleep, but awoke, deep in the night, to find my uncle brooding in a chair by my bed. The moon was high in the unclouded heaven. There was no sound or stirring in all the world—a low, unresting, melancholy swish and sighing upon the rocks below my window, where the uneasy sea plainted of some woe long forgot by all save it, which was like a deeper stillness and silence. The Lost Soul was lifted old and solemn and gray in the cold light and shadow of the

night. I was troubled: for my uncle sat in the white beam, striking in at my window, his eyes staring from cavernous shadows, his face strangely fixed and woful —drawn, tragical, set in no incertitude of sorrow and grievous pain and expectation. I was afraid—'twas his eyes: they shook me with fear of the place and distance from which it seemed he gazed at me. 'Twas as though a gulf lay between, a place of ghostly depths, of echoes and jagged rock, dark with wind-blown shadows. He had brought me far (it seemed) upon a journey, leading me; and having now set my feet in other paths and turned my face to a City of Light, lifted in glory upon a hill, was by some unworthiness turned back to his own place, but stayed a moment upon the cloudy cliff at the edge of darkness, with the night big and thick beyond, to watch me on my way.

"Uncle Nick," said I, "'tis wonderful late in the night."

"Ay, Dannie," he answered; "but I'm wantin' sore t' sit by you here a spell."

"I'll not be able," I objected, "t' go t' sleep."

"'Twill do no hurt, lad," said he "if I'm wonderful quiet. An' I'll be quiet—wonderful quiet."

"But I'm *wantin'* t' go t' sleep!"

"Ah, well," said he, "I'll not trouble you, then. I would not have you lie awake. I'll go. Good-night. God bless you, lad!"

I wish I had not driven him away. . . .

VII

TWIN ISLANDS

IN all this time I have said little enough of Twist Tickle, never a word (I think) of Twin Islands, between whose ragged shores the sheltering tickle winds; and by your favor I come now gratefully to the task. 'Tis a fishing outport: a place of rock and sea and windy sky—no more than that—but much loved by the twelvescore simple souls of us, who asked for share of all the earth but salt-water and a harbor (with the winds blowing) to thrive sufficient to ourselves and to the world beyond. Had my uncle sought a secret place to foster the child that was I—which yet might yield fair wage for toil—his quest fortuitously ended when the *Shining Light* ran dripping out of the gale and came to anchor in the quiet water of the tickle. But more like 'twas something finer that moved him: in that upheaval of his life, it may be, 'twas a wistful turning of the heart to the paths and familiar waters of the shore where he lived as a lad. Had the *Shining Light* sailed near or far and passed the harbor by, the changed fortunes of — but there was no sailing by, nor could have been, for the great wind

upon whose wings she came was passionate, too, and fateful.

If 'tis a delight to love, whatever may come of it (as some hold), I found delight upon the grim hills of Twin Islands. . . .

They lie hard by the coast, but are yet remote: Ship's Run divides them from the long blue line of main-land which lifts its barren hills in misty distance from our kinder place. 'Tis a lusty stretch of gray water, sullen, melancholy, easily troubled by the winds, which delight, it seems, sweeping from the drear seas of the north, to stir its rage. In evil weather 'tis wide as space; when a nor'easter lifts the white dust of the sea, clouding Blow-me-down-Billy of the main-land in a swirl of mist and spume, there is no departure; nor is there any crossing (mark you) when in the spring of the year a southerly gale urges the ice to sea. We of Twin Islands were cut off by Ship's Run from all the stirring and inquisitive world.

According to Tumm, the clerk of the *Quick as Wink*, which traded our harbor, Twin Islands are t' the west-'ard o' the Scarf o' Fog, a bit below the Blue Gravestones, where the *Soldier o' the Cross* was picked up by Satan's Tail in the nor'easter o' the Year o' the Big Shore Catch. "Oh, I knows un!" says he. "You opens the Tickle when you rounds Cocked Hat o' the Hen-an'-Chickens an' lays a course for Gentleman Cove, t'other side o' the bay. Good harbor in dirty weather," says he: "an', ecod! my lads, a hearty folk."

This is forbidding enough, God knows! as to situation; but though the ancient islands, scoured by wind and rain, are set in a misty isolation and show gray, grimly wrinkled faces to the unkind sea, betraying no tenderness, they are green and genial in the places within: there are valleys; and the sun is no idler, and the lean earth of those parts is not to be discouraged.

"God-forsaken place, Nick!" quoth Tom Bull, at the Anchor and Chain.

"How was you knowin' that, Tom?" says my uncle. "You isn't never *been* there."

"*Sounds* God-forsaken."

"So does hell."

"Well, hell *is*."

"There you goes again, Tom Bull!" cries my uncle, with a sniff and wrathful twitch of the lip. "There you goes again, you dunderhead—jumpin' t' conclusions!"

Tom Bull was shocked.

"Hell God-forsaken!" growls my uncle. "They's more hard labor for the good Lord t' do in hell, Tom Bull, than any place I knows on; an' I 'low He's right there, kep' double watches on the jump, a-doin' of it!"

Twist Tickle pursues an attenuated way between the Twins, broadening into the harbor basin beyond the Pillar o' Cloud, narrowing at the Finger and Thumb, widening, once more, into the lower harbor, and escaping to the sea, at last, between Pretty Willie and the Lost Soul, which are great bare heads. You get a glimpse of the Tickle from the deck of the mail-boat:

this when she rounds the Cocked Hat and wallows off towards Gentleman Cove. 'Tis but a niggardly glimpse at best, and vastly unfair to the graces of the place: a white house, wee and listlessly tilted, gripping a rock, as with expiring interest; a reach of placid water, deep and shadowy, from which rise the hills, gray, rugged, splashed with green; heights beyond, scarfed with clinging wisps of mist.

The white houses are builded in a fashion the most disorderly at the edge of the tickle, strung clear from the narrows to the Lost Soul and straying somewhat upon the slopes, with the scrawny-legged flakes clinging to the bare declivities and the stages squatted at the water-side; but some houses, whose tenants are solitary folk made morose by company, congregate in the remoter coves—where the shore is the shore of the open sea and there is no crowd to trouble—whence paths scramble over the hills to the Tickle settlement. My uncle's cottage sat respectably, even with some superiority, upon a narrow neck of rock by the Lost Soul, outlooking, westerly, to sea, but in the opposite direction dwelling in a way more intimate and fond upon the unruffled water of Old Wives' Cove, within the harbor, where rode the *Shining Light.*

"An' there she'll lie," he was used to saying, with a grave and mysteriously significant wink, "until I've sore need o' she."

"Ay," said they, "or till she rots, plank an' strand."

"An she rots," says my uncle, "she may rot: for

she'll sail these here waters, sound or rotten, by the Lord! an I just put her to it."

Unhappy, then, perhaps, Twin Islands, in situation and prospect; but the folk of that harbor, who deal barehanded with wind and sea to catch fish, have this wisdom: that a barren, a waste of selfish water, a low, soggy sky have nothing to do with the hearts of men, which are independent, in love and hope and present content, of these unfeeling things. We were seafaring men, every jack of the place, with no knowledge of a world apart from green water, which forever confronted us, fashioning our lives; but we played the old comedy as heartily, with feeling as true and deep, the same fine art, as you, my gentlefolk! and made a spectacle as grateful to the gods for whom the stage (it seems) is set.

And there is a road from the Tickle to the sea—to an outer cove, high-cliffed, frothy, sombre, with many melancholy echoes of wind and breakers and listless human voices, where is a cluster of hopeless, impoverished homes. 'Tis a wilful-minded path, lingering indolently among the hills, artful, intimate, wise with age, and most indulgently secretive of its soft discoveries. It is used to the lagging feet of lovers. There are valleys in its length, and winding, wooded stretches, kindly places; and there are arching alders along the way to provide a seclusion yet more tender. In the moonlight 'tis a path of enchantment—a way (as I know) of pain and high delight: of a wandering hope that tantalizes

but must in faith, as we are men, be followed to its catastrophe. I have suffered much of ecstasy and despair upon that path. 'Tis the road to Whisper Cove.

Judith dwelt at Whisper Cove. . . .

VIII

A MAID O' WHISPER COVE

FOURTEEN, then, and something more: a footloose lad of Twist Tickle—free to sail and wander, to do and dream, to read the riddles of my years, blithe and unalarmed. 'Tis beyond the will and wish of me to forget the day I lay upon the Knob o' Lookout, from afar keeping watch on the path to Whisper Cove—the taste of it, salty and cool, the touch of it upon my cheek and in my hair, the sunlight and scampering wind: the simple haps and accidents, the perception, awakening within me, and the portent. 'Twas blowing high and merrily from the west—a yellow wind from the warm west and from the golden mist and low blue line of coast at the other side of the bay. It rippled the azure floor between, and flung the spray of the breakers into the sunshine, and heartily clapped the gray cliff, and pulled the ears of the spruce, and went swinging on, in joyous mood, to the gray spaces of the great sea beyond Twin Islands. I shall not forget: for faith! the fates were met in conspiracy with the day to plot the mischief of my life. There was no warning, no question to ease the issue

in my case: 'twas all ordained in secret; and the lever of destiny was touched, and the labor of the unfeeling loom went forward to weave the pattern of my days.

Judith (as I know) washed her mother's face and hands with conscientious care: 'twas her way. Doubtless, in the way she had, she chattered, the while, a torrent of affectionate reproof and direction, which gave no moment for promise or complaint, and at last, with a raised finger and a masterful little flash of the eye, bade the flighty woman keep out of mischief for the time. What then, 'tis easy to guess: she exhausted the resources of soap and water in her own adornment (for she smelled of suds in the cabin of the *Shining Light*), and set out by the path from Whisper Cove to Twist Tickle, with never a glance behind, but a prim, sharp outlook, from shyly downcast eyes, upon all the world ahead. A staid, slim little maid, with softly fashioned shoulders, carried sedately, her small head drooping with shy grace, like a flower upon its slender stalk, seeming as she went her dainty way to perceive neither scene nor incident of the passage, but yet observing all in swift, sly little flashes.

"An' a-ha!" thinks I, "she's bound for the *Shining Light!*"

It was blowing: on the edge of the cliff, where the path was lifted high above the sea, winding through sunlit space, the shameless old wind, turned skyward by the gray cliff, made bold, in the way the wind knows and will practise, wherever it blows. The wind cared

nothing for the tragic possibility of a lad on the path: Judith was but a fluttering rag in the gust. At once—'twas a miracle of activity—her face reappeared in a cloud of calico and tawny hair. She looked fearfully to the path and yellow hills; and her eyes (it must be) were wide with the distress of this adventure, and there were blushes (I know) upon her cheeks, and a flash of white between her moist red lips. Without hint of the thing (in her way)—as though recklessly yielding to delight despite her fears—she lifted her hands and abandoned the pinafore to the will of the wind with a frightened little chuckle. 'Twas her way: thus in a flash to pass from nay to yea without mistrust or lingering. Presently, tired of the space and breeze, she dawdled on in the sunshine, idling with the berries and scrawny flowers by the way, and with the gulls, winging above the sea, until, as with settled intention, she vanished over the cliff by the goat-path to Old Wives' Cove, where rode the *Shining Light*, sound asleep under a blanket of sunshine in the lee of the Lost Soul.

I followed.

In the cabin of the *Shining Light*, cross-legged on the table, in the midst of the order she had accomplished, her hands neatly folded in her lap, Judith sat serene. She had heard my clatter on the gang-plank, my shuffle and heavy tread on the deck. 'Twas I, she knew: there was no mistaking, God help me! the fall of my feet on road or deck. It may be that her heart

for a moment fluttered to know that the lad that was I came at last. She has not told me: I do not know. But faith! my own was troublesome enough with a new and irritating uneasiness, for which was no accounting.

I feigned astonishment. "Hello!" quoth I; "what you doin' here?"

She turned away—the eager expectation all fled from her face: I saw it vanish.

"Eh?" says I.

She sniffed: 'twas a frank sniff of contempt—pain, like a half-heard sob, mixed with the scorn of it.

"What you doin' here?"

I stood reproached; she had achieved it in a glance—a little shaft of light, darting upon me, departing, having dealt its wound.

"Well, maid," cries I, the smart of her glance and silence enraging me, "is you got no tongue?"

She puckered her brows, pursed her lips; she sighed—and concerned herself with her hair-ribbon, quite placid once more. 'Twas a trick well known to me. 'Twas a trick aggravating to the temper. 'Twas a maid's trick—an ensnaring, deadly trick. 'Twas a trick ominous of my imminent confusion.

"Eh?" I demanded.

"Dannie, child," she admonished, gently, "God hates a liar!"

I might have known.

"T' make believe," cries she, "that I'd not be here! How could you!"

"'Tis not a lie."

"'Tis a white lie, child," she chided. "You've come, Dannie, poor lad! t' be a white liar. 'Tis a woful state—an' a parlous thing. For, child, if you keeps on—"

She had paused. 'Twas a trick to fetch the question. I asked it.

"You'll be a blue one," says she. "An' then—"

"What then?"

"Blue-black, child. An' then—"

I waited.

"Oh, Dannie, lad!" cries she, her little hands clasped, a pitiful quaver in her voice, so that I felt consigned to woe, indeed, for this misdoing, "you'll be a liar as black as—"

There was no more of it.

"You dare not say it!" I taunted.

I did not wish that she should: not I! but still, being a lad, would have her come close enough to sauce the devil. But I would not have her say that word. Indeed, I need not have troubled. 'Twas not in her mind to be so unmaidenly, with a lad at hand to serve her purpose.

"No," says she, "I dare not; but you, Dannie, bein' a lad—"

Her voice trailed off expectantly.

"Black as hell?"

She nodded.

"Come, maid," says I, "you've called me a liar."

"I wasn't wantin' to."

"No odds," says I. "An' if I'm a liar," says I, "I 'low I'm a fool for it?"

"You is."

"Then, my maid," cries I, in triumph, "you'll be keepin' me company in hell! You've called me a fool. 'An' whoso calleth his brother a fool—'"

"Oh no," says she, quite undisturbed. "'Tis not so.'

"Not so?"

"Why, no, child! Didn't you know?"

"But it *says* so!"

"Dannie, child," says she, with unruffled superiority, "I come down from heaven one year an' five months after God sent you. An' God *told* me, Dannie, just afore I left Un at the Gate, that He'd changed His mind about that."

The particular color of this stupendous prevarication I am still unable to determine. . . .

Here in the cabin of the *Shining Light* was my workshop. On the bench, stout-hulled and bravely masted, was a bark to be rigged. My fingers itched to be dealing with the delicate labor. 'Twas no time now, thought I, all at once, to dally with the child. The maid was a sweet maid, an amiably irritating maid, well enough, in her way, to idle with; but the building of the ship was a substantial delight, subject to the mastery of a man with hands and a will, the end a sure achievement—no vague, elusive thing, sought in madness, vanishing in the grasp. I would be about this man's-work. Never was such a ship as this ship

should be! And to the work went Judith and I. But presently, as never happened before, I was in some strange way conscious of Judith's nearness. 'Twas a soft, companionable presence, indeed! I bungled the knots, and could no longer work my will upon the perverse spars, but had rather dwell upon her slender hands, swiftly, capably busy, her tawny hair, her sun-browned cheeks and the creamy curve of her brow, the blue and flash and fathomless depths of her eyes. I remembered the sunlight and freshening breeze upon the hills, the chirp and gentle stirring of the day, the azure sea and far-off, tender mist, the playful breakers, flinging spray high into the yellow sunshine. 'Twas no time now, thought I, to be busied with craft in the gloomy cabin of the *Shining Light*, which was all well enough in its way; 'twas a time to be abroad in the sunlit wind. And I sighed: not knowing what ailed me, but yet uneasy and most melancholy. The world was an ill place for a lad to be (thinks I), and all the labor of it a vanity. . . .

Now the afternoon was near spent. My hands were idle—my eyes and heart far astray from the labor of the time. It was very still and dreamful in the cabin. The chinks were red with the outer glow, and a stream of mote-laden sunlight, aslant, came in at the companionway.

It fell upon Judith.

"Judy," I whispered, bending close, "I 'low I might as well—might as well have—"

She looked up in affright.

"Have a kiss," said I.

"Oh no!" she gasped.

"Why not? Sure I'm able for it!"

"Ay," she answered, in her wisdom yielding this; "but, Dannie, child, 'tisn't *'lowed*."

"Why not?"

Her eyes turned round with religious awe. "God," said she, with a solemn wag, "wouldn't like it."

"I'd never stop for that."

"May be," she chided; "but I 'low, lad, we ought t' 'blige Un once in a while. 'Tis no more than kind. An' what's a kiss t' lack? Pooh!"

I was huffed.

"Ah, well, then!" said she, "an your heart's set on it, Dannie, I've no mind t' stop you. But—"

I moved forward, abashed, but determined.

"But," she continued, with an emphasis that brought me to a stop, "I 'low I better ask God, t' make sure."

'Twas the way she had in emergencies.

"Do," said I, dolefully.

The God of the lad that was I—the God of his childish vision, when, in the darkness of night, he lifted his eyes in prayer, seeking the leading of a Shepherd—was a forbidding God: white, gigantic, in the shape of an old, old man, the Ancient of Days, in a flowing robe, seated scowling upon a throne, aloft on a rolling cloud, with an awful mist of darkness all roundabout. But Judith, as I knew, visualized in a more felicitous way. The God to whom she appealed was a rotund, florid

old gentleman, with the briefest, most wiry of sandy whiskers upon his chops, a jolly double chin, a sunburned nose, kindly blue eyes forever opened in mild wonder (and a bit bleared by the wind), the fat figure clad in broadly checked tweed knickerbockers and a rakish cap to match, like the mad tourists who sometimes strayed our way. 'Twas this complacent, benevolent Deity that she made haste to interrogate in my behalf, unabashed by the spats and binocular, the corpulent plaid stockings and cigar, which completed his attire. She spread her feet, in the way she had at such times; and she shut her eyes, and she set her teeth, and she clinched her hands, and thus silently began to wrestle for the answer, her face all screwed, as by a taste of lemon.[1]

Presently my patience was worn.

"What news?" I inquired.

"Hist!" she whispered. "He's lookin' at me through His glasses."

I waited an interval.

"What now, Judy?"

"Hist!" says she. "He's wonderful busy makin' up His mind. Leave Un be, Dannie!"

'Twas trying, indeed! I craved the kiss. Nor by watching the child's puckered face could I win a hint to ease the suspense that rode me. Upon the will of Judith's Lord God Almighty in tweed knickerbockers

[1] I am informed that there are strange folk who do not visualize after the manner of Judith and me. 'Tis a wonder how they conceive, at all!

surely depended the disposition of the maid. I wished He would make haste to answer.

"Judy, maid," I implored, "will He never have done?"

"You'll be makin' Un mad, Dannie," she warned.

"I can wait no longer."

"He's scowlin'."

I wished I had not interrupted.

"I 'low," she reported, "He'll shake His head in a minute."

'Twas a tender way to break ill news.

"Ay," she sighed, opening her eyes. "He've gone an' done it. I knowed it. He've said I hadn't better not. I'm wonderful sorry you've t' lack the kiss, Dannie. I'm wonderful sorry, Dannie," she repeated, in a little quiver of pity, "for *you!*"

She was pitiful: there's no forgetting that compassion, its tearful concern and wistfulness. I was bewildered. More wishful beseeching must surely have softened a Deity with a sunburned nose and a double chin! Indeed, I was bewildered by this fantasy of weeping and nonsense. For the little break in her voice and the veil of tears upon her eyes I cannot account. 'Twas the way she had as a maid: and concerning this I have found it folly to speculate. Of the boundaries of sincerity and pretence within her heart I have no knowledge. There was no pretence (I think); 'twas all reality — the feigning and the feeling — for Judith walked in a confusion of the truths of life with visions. There came a time—a moment in our lives—

when there was no feigning. 'Twas a kiss besought; and 'twas kiss or not, as between a man and a maid, with no Almighty in tweed knickerbockers conveniently at hand to shoulder the blame. Ah, well, Judith! the golden, mote-laden shaft which transfigured your childish loveliness into angelic glory, the encompassing shadows, the stirring of the day without, the winds of blue weather blowing upon the hills, are beauties faded long ago, the young denial a pain almost forgot. The path we trod thereafter, Judith, is a memory, too: the days and nights of all the years since in the streaming sunlight of that afternoon the lad that was I looked upon you to find the shadowy chambers of your eyes all misty with compassion.

"Dannie," she ventured, softly, "you're able t' take it."

"Ay—but will not."

"You're wonderful strong, Dannie, an' I'm but a maid."

"I'll wrest no kisses," said I, with a twitch of scorn, "from maids."

She smiled. 'Twas a passing burst of rapture, which, vanishing, left her wan and aged beyond her years.

"No," she whispered, but not to me, "he'd *not* do that. He'd not—do that! An' I'd care little enough for the Dannie Callaway that would."

"You cares little enough as 'tis," said I. "You cares nothing at all. You cares not a jot."

She smiled again: but now as a wilful, flirting maid. "As for carin' for *you*, Dannie," she mused, dissembling candor, "I *do*—an' I don't."

The unholy spell that a maid may weave! The shameless trickery of this!

"I'll tell you," she added, "the morrow."

And she would keep me in torture!

"There'll be no to-morrow for we," I flashed, in a passion. "You cares nothing for Dannie Callaway. 'Tis my foot," I cried, stamping in rage and resentment. "'Tis my twisted foot. I'm nothin' but a cripple!"

She cried out at this.

"A limpin' cripple," I groaned, "t' be laughed at by all the maids o' Twist Tickle."

She began now softly to weep. I moved towards the ladder—with the will to abandon her.

"Dannie," she called, "take the kiss."

I would not.

"Take two," she begged.

"Maid," said I, severely, "what about your God?"

"Ah, *but*—" she began.

"No, no!" cries I. "None o' that, now!"

"You'll not listen!" she pouted.

"'Twill never do, maid!"

"An you'd but hear me, child," she complained, "I'd 'splain—"

"*What about your God?*"

She turned demure—all in a flash. "I'll ask Un," said she, most piously. "You—you—you'll not run

off, Dannie," she asked, faintly, "when I—I—shuts my eyes?"

"I'll bide here," says I.

"Then," says she, "I'll ask Un."

The which she did, in her peculiar way. 'Twas a ceremony scandalously brief and hurried. Once I caught (I thought) a slit in her eye—a peep-hole through which she spied upon me. Presently she looked up with a shy little grin. "God says, Dannie," she reported, speaking with slow precision, the grin now giving place to an expression of solemnity and highest rapture, "that He 'lows He didn't know what a fuss you'd make about a little thing like a kiss. He've been wonderful bothered o' late by overwork, Dannie, an' He's sorry for what He done, an' 'lows you might overlook it this time. 'You tell Dannie, Judy,' says He, 'that he've simply no idea what a God like me haves t' put up with. They's a woman t' Thunder Arm,' says He, 'that's been worryin' me night an' day t' keep her baby from dyin', an' I simply *can't* make up my mind. She'll make me mad an she doesn't look out,' says He, 'an' then I'll kill it. An' I've the heathen, Judy—all them heathen—on my mind. 'Tis enough t' drive *any* God mad. An' jus' now,' says He, 'I've got a wonderful big gale blowin' on the Labrador, an' I'm near drove deaf,' says He, 'by the noise them fishermen is makin'. What with the Labradormen an' the woman t' Thunder Arm an' the heathen 'tis fair awful. An' now comes Dannie,' says He, 't' make me sick o' my berth! You tell Dannie,' says he, 't' take the kiss an' be done with it.

Tell un t' go ahead,' says He, 'an' not be afeared o' me. I isn't in favor o' kissin' as a usual thing,' says He, 'for I've always 'lowed 'twas sort o' silly; but if *you* don't mind, Judy,' says He, 'why, *I* can turn my head.'"

'Twas not persuasive.

"'Tis a white kiss," said she, seeking, in her way, to deck the thing with attractions.

I would not turn.

"'Tis all silk."

It budged me not, though I craved the kiss with a mounting sense of need, a vision of despair. It budged me not: I would not be beguiled.

"An' oh, Dannie!" she besought, with her hands appealing, "'tis *awful* expensive!"

I returned.

"Take it," she sobbed.

I pecked her lips.

"Volume II., page 26!" roared my uncle, his broad red face appearing at that moment in the companion-way. "You done well, Dannie! 'Tis quite t' the taste o' Skipper Chesterfield. You're sailin' twelve knots by the log, lad, on the course you're steerin'!"

So I did not have another; but the one, you may believe! had done the mischief.

IX

AN AFFAIR OF THE HEART

MY uncle's errand, speedily made known, for Judith's restoration, was this: to require my presence betimes at tea that evening, since (as he said) there was one coming by the mail-boat whom he would have me favorably impress with my appearance and state of gentility—a thing I was by no means loath to do, having now grown used to the small delights of display. But I was belated, as it chanced, after all: for having walked with Judith, by my uncle's hint, to the cairn at the crest of Tom Tulk's Head, upon the return I fell in with Moses Shoos, the fool of Twist Tickle, who would have me bear him company to Eli Flack's cottage, in a nook beyond the Finger, and lend him comfort thereafter, in good or evil fortune, as might befall. To this I gave a glad assent, surmising from the significant conjunction of smartened attire and doleful countenance that an affair of the heart was forward. And 'twas true; 'twas safely to be predicted, indeed, in season and out, of the fool of our harbor: for what with his own witless conjectures and the reports of his mates, made in

unkind banter, his leisure was forever employed in the unhappy business: so that never a strange maid came near but he would go shyly forth upon his quest, persuaded of a grateful issue. 'Twas heroic, I thought, and by this, no less than by his attachment, he was endeared to me.

I sniffed a change of wind as we fell in together. 'Twould presently switch to the south (I fancied); and 'twould blow high from the sou'east before the night was done. The shadows were already long; and in the west—above the hills which shut the sea from sight—the blue of mellow weather and of the day was fading. And by the lengthened shadows I was reminded that 'twas an untimely errand the fool was upon. "'Tis a queer time," said I, "t' be goin' t' Eli's. Sure, Moses, they'll be at the board!"

"Dear man! but I'm wonderful crafty, Dannie," he explained, with a sly twitch of the eye. "An they're at table, lad, with fish an' brewis sot out, I'm sure t' cotch the maid within."

"The maid?" I inquired.

"Ay, lad; 'tis a maid. I'm told they's a new baggage come t' Skipper Eli's for a bit of a cruise."

I caught a bashful flush mounting to his ears and the rumble of a chuckle in his throat.

"She've come from Tall Pine Harbor," said he, "with a cask o' liver; an' I'm told she've her heart dead sot on matrimony."

"Larry Hull's maid?"

"No, lad; 'tis not she. She've declined. Las' fall, Dannie, bein' wind-bound in a easterly gale, I cotched she at Skipper Jonathan Stark's. No; she've declined."

"'Tis Maria Long, then," said I.

"No, lad; she've declined, too."

"Elizabeth Wutt?"

"She've declined."

"'Tis not the Widow Tootle!"

"No; *she've* declined," he answered, dismally. "But," he added, with a sudden access of cheerfulness, "she come wonderful *near* it. 'Twas a close call for she! She 'lowed, Dannie, that an my beard had been red she might ha' went an' done it, takin' chances with my wits. She might, says she, put up with a lack o' wit; but a beard o' proper color she must have for peace o' mind. You sees, Dannie, Sam Tootle had a red beard, an' the widow 'lowed she'd feel strange with a yellow one, bein' accustomed t' the other for twenty year. She've declined, 'tis true; but she come wonderful *near* t' sayin the word. 'Twas quite encouragin'," he added, then sighed.

"You keep on, Moses," said I, to hearten him, "an' you'll manage it yet."

"Mother," he sighed, "used t' 'low so."

We were now come to a rise in the road, whence, looking back, I found the sky fast clouding up. 'Twas a wide view, falling between the black, jagged masses of Pretty Willie and the Lost Soul, cast in shadow—a reach of blood-red sea, with mounting clouds at the edge of the world, into which the swollen sun had

dropped, to set the wind-blown tatters in a flare of red and gold. 'Twas all a sullen black below, tinged with purple and inky blue; but high above the flame and glow of the rags of cloud there hung a mottled sky, each fleecy puff a touch of warmer color upon the pale green beyond. The last of our folk were bound in from the grounds, with the brown sails spread to a rising breeze, the fleet of tiny craft converging upon the lower-harbor tickle; presently the men would be out of the roughening sea, pulling up the harbor to the stage-heads, there to land and split the catch. Ay, a change of wind, a switch to the sou'east, with the threat of a gale with rain; 'twould blow before dark, no doubt, and 'twas now all dusky in the east, where the sky was cold and gray. Soon the lamps would be alight in the kitchens of our harbor, where the men folk, cleansed of the sweat of the sea, would sit warm and dry with their wives and rosy lads and maids, caring not a whit for the wind and rain without, since they had what they had within.

"I'm knowin' no other maid at Tall Pine Harbor," said I, "that's fit t' wed."

"'Tis a maid o' the name o' Pearl," he confided; "an' I'm told she's fair on looks."

"Pearl what, Moses?"

"I disremember, Dannie," he answered, a bit put out. "The lads told me, out there on the grounds the day, when I got wind of her bein' here, but I've clean forgot. It won't matter, anyhow, will it, lad? for, sure, I'm able t' *ask*."

"An' you've hopes?"

He trudged on, staring straight ahead, now silent and downcast. "Well, no, Dannie," he answered, at last, "not what you might call *hopes*. So many, Dannie, haves declined, that I'd be s'prised t' cotch one that wouldn't slip the hook. But not havin' cast for this one, lad, I've not give up. I'm told they's no wonderful demand for the maid on accounts of temper and cross-eyes; an' so I was sort of allowin' she *might* have a mind t' try a fool, him bein' the on'y skipper t' hand. Mother used t' say if I kep' on she 'lowed I'd haul one out in the end: an' I 'low mother knowed. She never 'lowed I'd cotch a perfeck specimen, in p'int o' looks, for them, says she, mates accordin' t' folly; but she did say, Dannie, that the maid I wed would come t' know me jus' the way mother knowed me, an' t' love me jus' the way mother loved me, for my goodness. 'Twas kind o' mother t' think it: nobody else, Dannie, was ever so kind t' me. I wonder why *she* was! Would you say, Dannie," he asked, turning anxiously, "that a cross-eyed maid *could* be fair on looks? Not," he added, quickly, "that I'd care a wonderful sight: for mother used t' say that looks wiped off in the first washin', anyhow."

I did not answer.

"You wouldn't say, would you, lad," he went on, "that *I* was fair on looks?"

An ungainly little man, this Moses Shoos: stout enough about the chest, where a man's strength needs lie, big-shouldered, long-armed, but scrawny and

crooked in the legs and of an inconfident, stumbling gait, prone to halt, musing vacantly as he went. He was bravely clad upon his courtship: a suit of homespun from the *Quick as Wink*, given in fair dealing, as to quality, by Tumm, the clerk, but with reservations as to fit—everywhere (it seemed) unequal to its task, in particular at the wrists and lean shanks. His visage was in the main of a gravely philosophical cast, full at the forehead, pensive about the eyes, restless-lipped, covered upon cheeks and chin with a close, curly growth of yellow beard of a color with his hair: 'twas as though, indeed, he carried a weight of thought —of concern and helpless sympathy for the woes of folk. 'Twas set with a child's eyes: of the unfaded blue, inquiring, unafraid, innocent, pathetic, reflecting the emotion of the moment; quick, too, but in no way to shame him, to fill with tears. He spoke in a colorless drawl, with small variation of pitch: a soft, low voice, of clear timbre, with a note of melancholy insistently sounding, whatever his mood. I watched him stumble on; and I wondered concerning the love his mother had for him, who got no other love, but did not wonder that he kept her close within his heart, for here was no mystery.

"Eh, Dannie?" he reminded me, with a timid little smile, in which was yet some glint of vanity.

"Oh, ay!" I answered; "you're fair on looks."

"Ay," said he, in fine simplicity; "mother used t' say so, too. She 'lowed," he continued, "that I was a sight stronger on looks 'n any fool she ever knowed.

It might have been on'y mother, but maybe not. The lads, Dannie, out there on the grounds, is wonderful fond o' jokin', an' *they* says I've a power o' looks; but mother," he concluded, his voice grown caressive and reverent, "wouldn't lie."

It gave me a familiar pang—ay, it *hurt* me sore—to feel this loving confidence vibrate upon the strings within me, and to know that the echo in my heart was but an echo, after all, distant and blurred, of the reality of love which was this fool's possession.

"An' she said that?" I asked, in poignant envy.

"Oh, ay!" he answered. "Afore she knowed I was a fool, lad, she 'lowed she had the best kid t' Twist Tickle."

"An' after?" I demanded.

"It didn't seem t' make no difference, Dannie, not a jot."

I wisht I had a mother.

"I wisht, Dannie," said he, in a break of feeling for me, "that *you* had a mother."

"I wisht I had," said I.

"I wisht," said he, in the way of all men with mothers, as God knows why, "that you had one—just like mine."

We were come to the turn in the road, where the path descended at haphazard, over the rocks and past the pigpen, to the cottage of Eli Flack, builded snugly in a lee from the easterly gales. For a moment, in the pause, the fool of Twist Tickle let his hand rest upon my shoulder, which never before had happened in all our intercourse, but withdrew it, as though awakened

from this pitying affection to a sense of his presumption, which never, God witness! did I teach him.

"'Tis a grand sunset," said he. "Look, Dannie; 'tis a sunset with gates!"

'Twas so: great black gates of cloud, edged with glowing color, with the quiet and light of harbor beyond.

"With gates!" he whispered.

'Twas the fancy of a fool; nay, 'twas the fancy (as chanced his need) of some strange wisdom.

"Dannie," said he, "they's times when I sees mother's face peerin' at me from them clouds—her own dear face as 'twas afore she died. She's keepin' watch from the windows o' heaven—keepin' watch, jus' like she used t' do. You'll never tell, will you, lad? You'll not shame me, will you? They'd laugh, out there on the grounds, an you told: for they're so wonderful fond o' laughter—out there on the grounds. I lives, somehow," said he, brushing his hand in bewilderment over his eyes, "in the midst o' laughter, but have no call t' laugh. I wonder why, for mother didn't laugh; an' I wonder why *they* laughs so much. They'd laugh, Dannie, an you told un she was keepin' watch; an' so you will not: for I've growed, somehow, wonderful tired o' laughter—since mother died. But 'tis so: I knows 'tis so! I sees her face in the light o' sunsets—just as it used t' be. She comes t' the gate, when the black clouds arise t' hide the mystery we've no call t' know, an' the dear Lord cares not what we fathom; an' I sees her, Dannie, from my punt, still

keepin' watch upon me, just like she done from the window, afore she went an' died. She was a wonderful hand, somehow, at keepin' watch at the window. She'd watch me go an' watch me come. I've often wondered why she done it. I've wondered, Dannie, an' wondered, but never could tell why. Why, Dannie, I've knowed her t' run out, by times, an' say: 'Come, dear, 'tis time you was within. Hush, lad, never care. They'll never hurt you, dear,' says she, 'when you're within—with me.' An', Dannie, t' this day I'm feared t' look into the sky, at evening, when I've been bad, lest I sees her saddened by my deeds; but when I'm good, I'm glad t' see her face, for she smiles, lad, just like she used t' do from the window—afore they buried her."

"Ay," said I; "I've no doubt, Moses—nar a doubt at all."

The wind had risen; 'twas blowing from south by sou'east in meaning gusts: gusts intent upon riot, without compassion, loosed and conscious of release to work the will they had. The wind cares nothing for the needs of men; it has no other feeling than to vent its strength upon the strength of us—the lust (it seems to me) for a trial of passion, not knowing the enlistment of our hearts. 'Tis by the heart alone that we outlive the sea's angry, crafty hate, for which there is no cause, since we would live at peace with it: for the heart remembers the kitchens of our land, and, defiant or not, evades the trial, repressed by love, as the sea knows no repression. 'Twas blowing smartly, with

the promise of greater strength—'twas a time for reefs; 'twas a time for cautious folk, who loved their young, to walk warily upon the waters lest they be undone. The wind is a taunter; and the sea perversely incites in some folk—though 'tis hardly credible to such as follow her by day and night—strange desire to flaunt abroad, despite the bitter regard in which she holds the sons of men. I was glad that the folk of our harbor were within the tickle: for the sea of Ship's Run, now turned black, was baring its white teeth. 'Twas an unkind place to be caught in a gale of wind; but our folk were wise—knowing in the wiles of the sea—and were not to be trapped in the danger fools despise.

"I'm on'y a fool," said Moses Shoos; "but, Dannie, mother 'lowed, afore she died, that I was wonderful good t' she. 'Moses, lad,' says mother, on that day, 'fool or no fool, looks or not, you been wonderful good t' me. I could never love you more; an' I wouldn't trade you, lad, for the brightest man o' Twist Tickle. Does you hear me, dear?' says she. 'I wants you t' remember. I loves you,' says she; 'an' fool or no fool, I'd never trade you off, you've been so good t' me.'"

"T' be sure not!" cries I.

"Not mother," said he; "not—*my* mother!"

I reminded him that 'twas time to be about his courtship, for the light was fading now, and 'twould soon be dark.

"Ay," said he; "mother 'lowed 'twasn't good for man t' be alone. An' I 'low she knowed."

I watched him down the hill. . . .

I was but a motherless lad—not yet grown wise, but old enough, indeed, to want a mother—in some dim way (which even yet is not clear to my heart's ignorance, nor ever will be, since I am born as I am) sensitive to feel the fathomless, boundless lack, poignantly conscious that my poor vision, at its clearest, was but a flash of insight. I used to try, I know, as a child, lying alone in the dark, when my uncle was gone to bed, to conjure from the shadows some yearning face, to feel a soft hand come gratefully from the hidden places of my room to smooth the couch and touch me with a healing touch, in cure of my uneasy tossing, to hear a voice crooning to my woe and restlessness; but never, ache and wish as I would, did there come from the dark a face, a hand, a voice which was my mother's; nay, I must lie alone, a child forsaken in the night, wanting that brooding presence, in pain for which there was no ease at all in all the world. I watched the fool of Twist Tickle go gravely in at the kitchen door, upon his business, led by the memory of a wisdom greater than his own, beneficent, continuing, but not known to me, who was no fool; and I envied him—spite of his burden of folly—his legacy of love. 'Twas fallen into dusk: the hills were turning shapeless in the night, the glow all fled from the sky, the sea gone black. But still I waited—apart from the rock and shadows and great waters of the world God made—a child yearning for the face and hand and tender guidance of the woman who was his own, but yet had wandered away into the shades from which no need

could summon her. It seemed to me, then, that the mothers who died, leaving sons, were unhappy in their death, nor ever could be content in their new state. I wanted mine—I wanted her!—wanted her as only a child can crave, but could not have her—not though I sorely wanted her. . . .

He came at last—and came in habitual dignity—punctiliously closing the door behind him and continuing on with grave steps.

"You here, Dannie?" he asked.

"Ay, Moses; still waitin'."

"'Tis kind, lad."

"I 'lowed I'd wait, Moses," I ventured, "t' find out."

"'Tis grown thick," said he. "'Twill blow from the east with fog an' rain. You're bound home, Dannie?"

"Ay," said I; "'tis far past tea-time."

We got under way.

"'Twill blow an uncivil sort o' gale from the east," he remarked, in a casual way. "We'll have Sunk Rock breakin' the morrow. 'Twill not be fit for fishin' on the Off-an'-On grounds. But I 'low I'll go out, anyhow. Nothin' like a spurt o' labor," said he, "t' distract the mind. Mother always said so; an' she knowed."

"The maid would not have you, Moses?"

"Mother always 'lowed," he answered, "that 'twas wise t' distract the mind in case o' disappointment.

I 'low I'll overhaul the splittin'-table when I gets t' home. She needs a scrubbin'."

We came to the rise in the road.

"Mother," said he, "'lowed that if ever I come in from Whisper Cove t' build at Twist Tickle, she'd have the house sot here. I 'low I'll put one up, some time, t' have it ready ag'in' the time I'm married. Mother 'lowed 'twas a good thing t' be forehanded with they little things." The note of melancholy, always present, but often subdued, so that it sounded below the music of his voice, was now obtrusive: a monotonous repetition, compelling attention, insistent, an unvarying note of sadness. "Ay," he continued; "mother 'lowed 'twas a good thing t' have a view. She'd have it sot here, says she, facin' the west, if ever I got enough ahead with the fish t' think o' buildin'. She'd have it sot, says she, so she could watch the sunset an' keep a eye on the tickle t' see my punt come in. She was wonderful on sunsets, was mother; an' she was sort o' sot, somehow, on keepin' watch on me. Wonderful good o' she, wasn't it, Dannie, t' want t' keep watch—on me?" Again the note of melancholy, throbbing above the drawl—rising, indeed, into a wail. "So," said he, "I 'low I'll just put up a house, by-an'-by, for the wife I'm t' have; an' I'll have it here, I'm thinkin', for mother 'lowed my wife would want it with a view o' the tickle, t' watch my punt come in. Think she will, Dannie? Think she will?"

The mail-boat blew in the narrows.

"I must haste!" said I.

"An you must haste, Dannie," said he, "run on. I'll not make haste, for I'm 'lowin' that a little spell o' thinkin' about mother will sort o' do me good."

I ran on, fast as my legs would carry me (which was not very fast). 'Twas the departing whistle; the mail-boat had come and gone—I saw her lights, shining warmly in the dark, grow small as she fared out through the narrows to the sea. It began to rain in great drops; overhead 'twas all black—roundabout a world of looming shadows, having lights, like stars, where the cottages were set on the hills. I made haste on my way; and as I pattered on over the uneven road to the neck of land by the Lost Soul, I blamed myself right heartily, regretting my uncle's disappointment, in that the expected guest would already have arrived, landed by way of my uncle's punt. And, indeed, the man was there, as I learned: for my uncle met me on the gravelled path of our garden, to bid me, but not with ill-temper, begone up-stairs and into clean linen and fitting garments, which were laid out and waiting (he said) on my bed. And when, descending in clean and proper array, bejewelled to suit the occasion, by my uncle's command, I came to the best room, I found there a young man in black, scarce older, it seemed, than myself.

"This here young man, Dannie," says my uncle, with a flourish, "is your tutor."

I bowed.

"Imported direck," adds my uncle, "from Lon'on."

My tooter? It sounded musical: I wondered what the young man blew—but shook hands, in the Chesterfieldian manner (as best I had mastered it), and expressed myself (in such Chesterfieldian language as I could recall in that emergency) as being delighted to form an acquaintance so distinguished.

"Well done!" cries my uncle, past containing his pride in the Chesterfieldian achievement. "Sir Harry hisself couldn't beat it!"

The young man laughed pleasantly.

X

IMPORTED DIRECT

I LAUGHED, too, unable to help it, and my uncle guffawed, in his large way; and then we all laughed like tried friends together: so that 'twas plain, being thus at once set upon agreeable terms, with no shyness or threat of antipathy to give ill ease, that we three strange folk were well-met in the wide world. 'Twas cosey in the best room: a lively blaze in the fireplace, the room bright with lamplight, warm with the color of carpet and tapestried mahogany, spotless and grand, as I thought, in every part; ay, cosey enough, with good company well-met within, the risen wind clamoring through the night, the rain lashing the black panes, the sea rumbling upon the rocks below, and, withal, a savory smell abroad in goodly promise. My uncle, grown fat as a gnome in these days, grotesquely fashioned, miscellaneously clothed as ever, stood with legs wide upon the black wolf's-skin, his back to the fire, his great hands clasped over his paunch, lying as upon a shelf; regarding the direct importation and myself, the rise of my admiration, the room, the whole world, indeed, visible and invisible, with delight so boyish

that 'twas good to watch the play of satisfaction upon his fantastic countenance, which now rippled and twinkled from his black cravat to his topmost scars and bristles. Well-met were we three folk; ay, no doubt: I was in a glow of content with this new fortune.

'Tis strange how the affections fall. . . .

My tutor, John Cather, as his name turned out to be, was older than I, after all—my elder by five years, I fancied, with age-wise ways and a proud glance to overawe my youth, were need of it to come: a slight, dark-skinned man, clean-featured, lean-cheeked, full-lipped, with restless dark eyes, thin, olive-tinted hands, black hair, worn over-long, parted in the manner of a maid and falling upon his brow in glossy waves, which he would ruffle into disorder, with the air of knowing what he was about. He was clad all in black, for the reason, he said, that he aspired to holy orders: well-kept black, edged with linen of the whitest, and not ill cut, according to my uncle's fashion-plates, but sadly worn at the seams and everywhere brushed near threadbare. Now sprawled, hands pocketed, in a great-chair under the lamp, indolent with accomplished grace (it seemed), one long leg thrown languidly over the other, the slender foot never at rest, he was postured with that perfection of ease and gentility into which my uncle, watchful observer of the manners of the world he walked in, had many a time endeavored to command me, but with the most indifferent success. I listened

to my tutor's airy, rambling chit-chat of the day's adventures, captivated by the readiness and wit and genial outlook; the manner of it being new to my experience, the accompaniment of easy laughter a grateful enlightenment in a land where folk went soberly. And then and there—I remember, as 'twere an hour gone, the gale and the lamplight and the laughter of that time—I conceived for him an enduring admiration.

Taken by an anxious thought I whispered in my uncle's ear, having him bend his monstrous head close for secrecy.

"Eh?" says he.

I repeated the question.

"Steerage, lad," he answered. "Tut!" he growled, "none o' that, now! 'Twill be steerage."

It grieved me to know it.

"An' now, Dannie, lad," quoth my uncle, aloud, with a thirsty rubbing of the hands and a grin to match, "fetch the bottle. The bottle, b'y! 'Tis time for growed men t' pledge the v'y'ge. A bit nippy, parson man? The bottle, Dannie!"

"Bottle?" cries my tutor. "Why, really, you know, Skipper Nicholas, I—"

"Is you much give t' the use o' fo'c's'les, parson?" my uncle interrupted.

My tutor was not.

"Then," says my uncle, grimly, "you'll be wantin' a drap."

'Twas true enough, by my uncle's mysterious perversity: a drop would be wanted, indeed.

"Dannie, lad," he commanded, "fetch that there bottle!"

Cather tossed his head, with a brief little laugh, and then, resigned to my uncle's idiosyncrasy—divining the importance of it—gave me a quick nod of permission: the which I was glad to get, aware, as I was, of the hospitable meaning of my uncle's invitation and his sensitiveness in respect to its reception. So I got the ill-seeming black bottle from the locker, the tray and glasses and little brown jug from the pantry, the napkin from Agatha, in a flutter in the kitchen, and having returned to the best room, where the tutor awaited the event in some apparent trepidation, I poured my uncle's dram, and measured an hospitable glass for Cather, but with less generous hand, not knowing his capacity, but shrewdly suspecting its inferiority. The glasses glittered invitingly in the light of the fire and lamp, and the red liquor lay glowing within: an attractive draught, no doubt—to warm, upon that windy night, and to appetize for the belated meat.

"T' you, parson!" says my uncle.

I touched the tutor's elbow.

"Water?" says he, in doubt. "Is it the custom?"

"Leave un be, Dannie."

"Whatever the custom," my tutor began, "of course—"

"'Tis wise," I ventured; minded to this by the man's awkward handling of the glass.

"For shame, Dannie!" cries my uncle. "Leave the

parson take his liquor as he will. 'Tis easy t' see he likes it neat."

Cather was amused.

"T' you, parson!" says my uncle.

The tutor laughed as he raised the glass of clear rum. I watched him with misgiving, alive to all the signs of raw procedure—the crook of his elbow, the tilt of the glass, the lift of his head. "To you, sir!" said he: and resolutely downed it. 'Twas impressive then, I recall, to observe his face—the spasm of shock and surprise, the touch of incredulity, of reproachful complaint, as that hard liquor coursed into his belly. 'Twas over in a moment—the wry mouth of it, the shudder—'twas all over in a flash. My tutor commanded his features, as rarely a man may, into stoical disregard of his internal sensations, and stood rigid, but calm, gripping the back of his chair, his teeth set, his lips congealed in an unmeaning grin, his eyes, which ran water against his will, fixed in mild reproach upon my beaming uncle, turning but once, I recall, to my solicitous self. With no unseemly outbreak—with but an inconsequent ahem and a flirt of his handkerchief over his lips—he returned to his composure. He would never again drink rum with my uncle, nor any other liquor, through all the years of our intimate connection; but this mattered not at all, since he had in the beginning pledged the old man's health with honor to himself. I was glad, however, that on the windy night of our meeting he was no more put out; for I wished him safe within my uncle's re-

gard, and knew, as I knew my uncle and the standards of our land, that he had by this gallant conduct achieved the exalted station. 'Twas a test of adaptability (as my uncle held), and of manhood, too, of which, as a tenet, taught me by that primitive philosopher, I am not able, bred as I am, to rid myself to this very day.

"Parson," said my uncle, solemnly, advancing upon the tutor, "ye *done* it, and ye done it *well!* Shake, shipmate—shake!"

The bell tinkled.

"Is that dinner?" cries my tutor. "Jove! but I *am* on edge."

We moved into the dining-room, myself pitying the man in a heartfelt way for his stomach's sake. 'Twas unkind in my uncle to sharpen his appetite with red rum.

My uncle stumped ahead, his wooden leg as blithe as the sound one, and was waiting in his humble quarters, with a gnome-like leer of expectation, when we entered. Neither my watch, set with its shy jewels, nor my sparkling fingers, nor the cut and quality and fit of my London-made clothes, which came close to perfection, nor anything concerning me, had caused my tutor even so much as to lift an eyebrow of surprise; but the appearance of the table, laid in the usual way, gave him an indubitable fit of amazement: for, as was our custom on the neck of land by the Lost Soul, at the one end, where sat the luxurious Dannie Callaway,

by no will of his own, was the glitter of silver, the flash and glow of delicate china, a flower or more from our garden, exquisite napery, the bounties of the kindly earth, whatever the cost; but at the other (the napery abruptly ceasing at the centre of the table because of the wear and tear that might chance) was set out, upon coarse ware, even to tin, fare of common description, forecastle fare, fisherman fare, unrelieved by any grace of flower or linen or glitter of glass, by any grace at all, save the grace of a black bottle, which, according to my experience, was sufficient to my uncle and such rough folk as dined with him. 'Twas no cause for surprise to me, to whom the enigma had been familiar from the beginning; but my tutor, come suddenly against the puzzle, was nonplussed, small blame to him.

"Parson," says my uncle, "*you*—goes steerage!"

My tutor started, regarded my uncle with a little jerk of astonishment; and his eyebrows went high—but still conveyed no more than polite inquiry. "I beg your pardon?" he apologized.

"Steerage, parson!" my uncle repeated. "Steerage passage, sir, the night!"

"Really!"

"'Tis the same as sayin'," I made haste to explain, "that you dines along o' Uncle Nick at *his* end."

The tutor was faintly amused.

"Steerage the night, parson; cabin the morrow," said my uncle. "Ye'll live high, lad, when ye're put in the cabin. Lord love ye, parson! but the feedin'

there is fair scandalous. 'Twould never do t' have the news of it go abroad. An' as for the liquor! why, parson," he proceeded, tapping my tutor on the breast, to impress the amazing disclosure, while we stood awkwardly, "Dannie haves a locker o' wine as old as your grandmother, in this here very room, waitin' for un t' grow up; an' he'll broach it, parson, like a gentleman—he'll broach it for you, when you're moved aft. But bein' shipped from the morrow, accordin' t' articles, signed, sealed, an' delivered," he added, gravely, "'twouldn't be just quite right, accordin' t' the lay o' fac's you're not in the way o' knowin', t' have ye feed along o' Dannie the night. 'Twouldn't be right, 'twouldn't be honest, as I sees it in the light o' them fac's; *not*," he repeated, in a whisper, ghostly with the awe and mystery of it, so that the tutor stared alarmed, "accordin' t' them damned remarkable fac's, as I *sees* un! But I've took ye in, parson—*I've* took ye in!" he cried, with a beaming welcome, to which my tutor instantly responded. "Ye'll find it snug an' plenty in the steerage, an' no questions asked. No questions," he repeated, with a wink of obscure meaning, "asked. They's junk an' cabbage, lad, with plum-duff t' top off with, for a bit of a treat, an' rum—why parson! as for the rum, 'tis as free as water! Sit ye," says he, "an' fall to!" his face all broken into smiles. "Fall to, parson, an' spare nothin'. Better the salt-junk o' toil," he improvised, in bold imitation of the Scripture, to my tutor's further astonishment, "than the ice-cream o' crime!"

My tutor helplessly nodded.

"Ol' Nick Top," says my uncle, "is on'y a hook-an'-line man, an' fares hard, as fishermen must; but little ol' Dannie Callaway, sittin' there in that little cabin o' his, is a damn little gentleman, sir, an' feeds off the best, as them big-bugs will."

We fell to.

"Wild night," my tutor remarked.

'Twas blowing wildly, indeed: the wind come to the east—sweeping in from the vast gray sea, with black rain to fling at the world. The windows rattled as the gusts went crying past the cottage. But a warm glow, falling from the lamp above the table, and the fire, crackling and snorting in the grate, put the power of the gale to shame. 'Twas cosey where we sat: warm, light, dry, with hunger driven off—a cosey place on a bitter night: a peace and comfort to thank the good God for, with many a schooner off our coast, from Chidley to the Baccalieu light, riding out the gale, in a smother of broken water, with a rocky shore and a flash of breakers to leeward. Born as I am—Newfoundlander to the marrow of my body and the innermost parts of my soul—my heart puts to sea, unfailingly, whatever the ease and security of my place, when the wind blows high in the night and the great sea rages. 'Tis a fine heritage we have, we outport Newfoundlanders—this feeling for the toss and tumult and dripping cold of the sea: this sympathy, born of self-same experience. I'd not exchange it, with the riches of cities to boot, for the thin-lipped, gray, cold-

eyed astuteness, the pomp and splendid masks, of the marts and avenues I have seen in my time. I'd be a Newfoundlander, outport born, outport bred, of outport strength and tenderness of heart, of outport sincerity, had I my birth to choose. . . .

"Dannie," says my uncle, peering inquisitively into the cabin, "how d'ye like that there fresh beef?"

'Twas good.

"He likes it!" cries my uncle, delighted. "Parson, he likes it. Hear un? He likes it. An' 'tis paid for, parson—paid for! Dannie," says he, again leaning forward, eyes bent upon my plates, "how d'ye like them there fresh greens? Eh, lad?"

They were very good.

"An' paid for, parson—all paid for!"

My tutor, poor man! stared agape, his knife and fork laid by; for my uncle, become now excited and most indiscreet, was in a manner the most perplexing —and in some mysterious indication—pointing, thumb down, towards the oil-cloth that floored the room, or to the rocks beneath, which the wind ran over, the house being set on spiles, or to the bowels of the earth, as you may choose. 'Twas a familiar thing to me—the mystery of the turned thumb and spasmodic indication, the appearance, too, at such times, of my uncle's eyes: round, protruding, alight with wicked admiration, starting from the scars and bristles and disfigurements of his face, but yet reflecting awe, as of some unholy daring, to be mightily suffered for in due time.

But 'twas not familiar to my tutor, nor, doubtless, had ever occurred to his imagination, sophisticated as he may have thought it; he could do nothing but withstand the amazement as best he might, and that in a mean, poor way, as he gazed alternately upon my uncle's flushed and deeply stirred countenance and upon my own saddened, aged face, speaking its ancient bewilderment. I pitied his disquietude, rather: for he was come from abroad to our coast—and could not understand.

"Dannie, lad," my uncle anxiously inquired, "*can* it be that you likes them there fresh carrots?"

It could easily be.

"An' paid for!" my uncle ejaculated, with no abatement of delight. "Parson," he proceeded, proudly, "good feed that there young gentleman has in the cabin, eh?"

My tutor agreed.

"None better in the world, eh?" the old man went on. "*You* couldn't do no better, could you?"

My tutor said that no man could.

"An' paid for," says my uncle, thumbing down. "Paid for, every bite!" He turned to me. "Dannie," says he, "how d'ye like them there new potatoes?"

They were more than palatable.

"Hear that, parson!" cries my uncle. "He likes un! Imported direck, sir, from Bermuda," says he, with all the vanity of riches. "Ever feed so high yourself, parson? Consignment arrived," says he, "per S.S. *Silvia*. You'll see it in the *Herald* an you looks."

"Really!" my tutor exclaimed, for lack of something better.

"Fac'," says my uncle; "an' paid for — skin an' eye!"

My tutor gave it up—permitted himself no longer to be troublesomely mystified; but after a quick glance from steerage to cabin, flashed with amused comprehension of the contrast, threw back his head with a little laugh quite detached from our concerns, and presently, innured to the grotesquery, busied himself with relish upon his salt-junk. Thereafter, the rum buzzing in his head, he ran on in a vivacious way upon all things under the sun, save himself, so that the windy night seemed very far away, indeed, and the lamplight and fire to lend an inspiration to his nimble tongue, until, in a lull of the engaging discourse, he caught my uncle peering greedily into the cabin, all but licking his lips, his nostrils distended to the savor, his flooded eyes fixed upon the fresh beef and vegetables in manifest longing, every wrinkle and muscle of his broad face off guard. My tutor—somewhat affected, I fancy, by this display—turned to me with a little frown of curiosity, an intrusive regard, it seemed to me, which I might in all courtesy fend off for the future. 'Twas now time, thinks I, to enlighten him with the knowledge I had: a task I had no liking for, since in its accomplishment I must stir my uncle unduly.

"Uncle Nick," says I, "'tis like Mr. Cather will be havin' a cut off my roast."

"The parson?" my uncle demanded.

"Ay," says I, disregarding his scowl; "a bit o' roast beef."

"Not he!" snaps my uncle. "Not a bite!"

I nerved myself—with a view wholly to Cather's information. "Uncle Nick," I proceeded, my heart thumping, such was the temerity of the thing, "'tis a dirty night without, an' here's Mr. Cather just joined the ship, an' I 'low, now, the night, Uncle Nick, that maybe you—"

"Me?" roars my uncle, in a flare of rage and horror. "*Me* touch it? ME!"

The vehemence of this amazed my tutor, who could supply no cause for the outburst; but 'twas no more than I had expected in the beginning.

"Me!" my uncle gasped.

There was a knock at the door. . . .

Ay, a knock at the door! 'Twas a thing most unexpected. That there should come a knock at the door! 'Twas past believing. 'Twas no timid tapping; 'twas a clamor—without humility or politeness. Who should knock? There had been no outcry; 'twas then no wreck or sudden peril of our people. Again it rang loud and authoritative—as though one came by right of law or in vindictive anger. My uncle, shocked all at once out of a wide-eyed daze of astonishment, pushed back from the board, in a terrified flurry, his face purpled and swollen, and blundered about for his staff; but before he had got to his feet, our maid-servant, on a fluttering run from the kitchen, was come to the door.

The gale broke in—rushing noises and a swirl of wet wind. We listened; there was a voice, not the maid-servant's—thin, high-tempered, lifted in irascible demand—but never a word to be distinguished in that obscurity of wind and rain. Twas cold, and the lamp was flaring: I closed the door against this inrush of weather.

My wretched uncle beckoned the tutor close, a finger lifted in caution; but still kept looking at me—and all the while stared at me with eyes of frightened width—in a way that saw me not at all. "Parson," he whispered, "they wasn't ar another man landed by the mail-boat the day, was they?"

The tutor nodded.

"Ye wouldn't say, would ye," my uncle diffidently inquired, "that he'd be from St. John's by the cut of um?"

"A gray little man from St. John's."

"I 'low then," says my uncle, "that he talked a wonderful spell about a lad, didn't um?"

My tutor shook his head.

"Nar a word—about *any* lad?"

"I'm sure not."

My uncle tapped the tip of his nose.

"A red mole," said my tutor.

And now my uncle poured himself a great dram of rum. 'Twas a cataract of liquor! Never such a draught had I known him dare—not in his most abandoned hours at the Anchor and Chain. 'Twas beyond him to down it at a gulp; 'twas in two gulps that he managed it, but with no breath between—and then

pushed the glass away with a shudder of disgust. Presently—when the liquor had restored his courage and begun to fetch the color to his pallid face—he got his staff in his fist and stumbled off in a high bluster, muttering gross imprecations as he went. The door slammed behind him; we heard no more—never a sound of growl or laugh from the best room where he sat with the gray little man from St. John's. 'Twas not a great while he stayed; and when he came again—the stranger having gone—he drew up to the board with all his good-humor and ease of mind regained. The rum had thickened his tongue and given a wilful turn to his wooden leg: no more. There was not a hint of discomposure anywhere about him to be descried; and I was glad of this, for I had supposed, being of an imaginative turn, that all the mystery of the luxury that was mine was at last come to its dreadful climax.

"A ol' shipmate, Dannie," my uncle genially explained.

'Twas hard to believe.

"Sailed along o' that there ol' bully t' Brazilian ports," says he, "thirty year ago."

I wondered why my uncle had not called for his bottle to be brought in haste to the best room.

"Still storming," the tutor ventured.

"Blowin' high," I remarked.

"I 'low I'll stay ashore, the morrow," says my uncle, "an' have a spurt o' yarnin' along o' that there ol' bully."

But the gray little man from St. John's—the gray little red-moled man—was no old shipmate (I knew), nor any friend at all, else my uncle would have had him hospitably housed for the night under our roof.

XI

THE GRAY STRANGER

WE sat late by the fire in the best room: into which I must fairly lug my perverse old uncle by the ears—for (says he) the wear an' tear of a wooden leg was a harsh thing for a carpet to abide, an' parlor chairs (says he) was never made for the hulks o' sea-farin' folk. 'Twas late, indeed, when he sent young Cather off to bed, with a warning to be up betimes, or go hungry, and bade me into the dining-room, as was our custom, to set out his bottle and glass. I turned the lamp high, and threw birch on the fire, and lifted his gouty wooden leg to the stool, and got his bottle and little brown jug, wondering, all the while, that my uncle was downcast neither by the wind nor the singular intrusion of the gray stranger. 'Twas a new thing in my life — a grateful change, for heretofore, in black gales, blowing in the night, with the thunder of waters under the window, it had been my duty to stand by, giving the comfort of my presence to the old man's melancholy and terror. 'Twas the company of the tutor, thinks I, and I was glad that the congenial fellow was come from a far place, escape cut off.

"Wonderful late," says my uncle.

"No," said I; "not late for windy nights."

"Too late for lads," says he, uneasily.

I poured his glass of rum.

"Think you, Dannie," my uncle inquired, "that he've the makin's of a fair rascal?"

"An' who?" says I, the stranger in mind.

"The tutor."

"I'm hopin' *not!*" I cried.

"Ay," says my uncle, an eye half closed; "but think you he *would* make a rascal—with clever management?"

"'Twould never come t' pass, sir."

My uncle sipped his rum in a muse.

"Uncle Nick," I complained, "leave un be."

"'Tis a hard world, Dannie," he replied.

"Do you leave un be!" I expostulated.

My uncle ignored me. "He've a eye, Dannie," says he, immersed in villanous calculation; "he've a dark eye. I 'low it *might* be managed."

'Twas an uncomfortable suspicion thus implanted; and 'twas an unhappy outlook disclosed — were my uncle to work his will upon the helpless fellow.

"Uncle Nick, you'll not mislead un?"

"Bein' under oath," my uncle answered, with the accent and glance of tenderest affection, "I'll keep on, Dannie, t' the end."

I poured the second dram of rum and pushed it towards him. 'Twas all hopeless to protest or seek an understanding. I loved the old man, and forgave the paradox of his rascality and loyal affection. The

young man from London must take his chance, as must we all, in the fashioning hands of circumstance. 'Twas not to be conceived that his ruin was here to be wrought. My uncle's face had lost all appearance of repulsion: scar and color and swollen vein—the last mark of sin and the sea—had seemed to vanish from it; 'twas as though the finger of God had in passing touched it into such beauty as the love of children may create of the meanest features of our kind. His glass was in his marred, toil-distorted hand; but his eyes, grown clear and sparkling and crystal-pure—as high of purpose as the eyes of such as delight in sacrifice—were bent upon the lad he had fostered to my age. I dared not—not the lad that was I—I dared not accuse him! Let the young man from London, come for the wage he got, resist, if need were to resist. I could not credit his danger—not on that night. But I see better now than then I saw.

"I 'low he'll do," said my uncle, presently, as he set down his glass. "Ay, lad; he'll do, if I knows a eye from a eye."

"Do what?"

"Yield," he answered.

"T' what?"

"Temptation."

"Uncle Nick," I besought, "leave the man be!"

"What odds?" he answered, the shadow of gloom come upon his face. "I'm cleared for hell, anyhow."

'Twas a thing beyond me, as many a word and wicked deed had been before. I was used to the

wretched puzzle—calloused and uncaring, since through all my life I still loved the man who fostered me, and held him in esteem. We fell silent together, as often happened when my uncle tippled himself drunk at night; and my mind coursed in free flight past the seeming peril in which my tutor slept, past the roar of wind and the clamor of the sea, beyond the woes of the fool who would be married, to the cabin of the *Shining Light*, where Judith sat serene in the midst of the order she had accomplished. I remembered the sunlight and the freshening breeze upon the hills, the chirp and gentle stirring of the day, the azure sea and the far-off, tender mist, the playful breakers, flinging spray into the yellow sunshine. I remembered the companionable presence of the maid, her slender hands, her tawny hair, her sun-browned cheeks and the creamy curve of her brow, the blue and flash and fathomless depths of her eyes. I remembered the sweet, moist touch of her lips: I remembered—in that period of musing, when my uncle, fallen disconsolate in his chair, sipped his rum—the kiss that she gave me in the cabin of the *Shining Light.*

"Dannie," says my uncle, "what you thinkin' about?"

I would not tell.

"'Tis some good thing," says he. "I'd like wonderful well t' know."

I could but sigh.

"Dannie," says he, in his wisdom, "you've growed wonderful fond o' Judy, isn't you?"

"I'm t' wed Judy," I answered.

'Twas with no unkindness—but with a sly twinkle of understanding—that he looked upon me.

"When I grows up," I added, for his comfort.

"No, no!" says he. "You'll never wed Judith. A gentleman? 'Twould scandalize Chesterfield."

"I will," said I.

"You'll *not!*" cries he, in earnest.

"But I will!"

The defiance still left him smiling. "Not accordin' t' Chesterfield," says he. "You'll be a gentleman, Dannie, when you grows up, an' you'll not be wantin' t' wed Judy."

"Not *wantin'* to?"

"No, no; you'll not be wantin' to."

"Still," says I, "will I wed Judy."

"An' why?"

"Because," said I, "I've kissed her!"

My uncle would have his last glass alone (he said); and I must be off to bed and to sleep; 'twas grown late for me (said he) beyond the stretch of his conscience to endure. Lord love us! (said he) would I never be t' bed in season? Off with me—an' t' sleep with me! 'Twould be the worse for me (said he) an he caught me wakeful when he turned in. The thing had an odd look—an odd look, to be sure—for never before had the old man's conscience pricked him to such fatherly consideration upon a night when the wind blew high. I extinguished the hanging lamp, smothered the smoul-

dering coals, set his night-lamp at hand, and drowsily climbed the stairs, having given him good-night, with a hearty "Thank 'e, sir, for that there tutor!" He bawled after me an injunction against lying awake; and I should presently have gone sound asleep, worn with the excitements of the day, had I not caught ear of him on the move. 'Twas the wary tap and thump of his staff and wooden leg that instantly enlisted my attention; then a cautious fumbling at the latch of the door, a draught of night air, a thin-voiced, garrulous complaint of the weather and long waiting.

"Hist, ye fool!" says my uncle. "Ye'll wake the lad."

"Damn the lad!" was the prompt response. "I wish he were dead."

My uncle laughed.

"Dead!" the stranger repeated. "Dead, Top! And you, too—you hound!"

'Twas an anathema spoken in wrath and hatred.

"I'm thinkin'," says my uncle, "that ye're an unkind man."

The stranger growled.

"Save your temper, man," my uncle admonished. "Ye'll need the last rag of it afore the night's by."

The man cried out against the threat.

"I'm tellin' ye," says my uncle—and I heard his broad hand come with a meaning clap on the stranger's shoulder—"that ye'll be wakin' the lad."

"The lad! the lad!" the stranger whined. "Is there

nothing in the world for you, Top, but that club-footed young whelp?"

I heard it! I heard the words! My door was ajar —my room at the head of the stair—my ears wide and anxious. I heard the words! There was no mistaking what this intruder said. "The club-footed young whelp!" says he. "Is there nothing in the world for you, Top, but that club-footed young whelp?" He said it—I remember that he said it—and to this day, when I am grown beyond the years of childish sensitiveness, I resent the jibe.

"Nothing," my uncle answered. "Nothing in the world, sir," he repeated, lovingly, as I thought, "but only that poor club-footed child!"

Sir? 'Twas a queer way to address, thinks I, this man of doubtful quality. Sir? I could not make it out.

"You sentimental fool!"

"Nay, sir," my uncle rejoined, with spirit. "An they's a fool in the company, 'tis yourself. I've that from the lad, sir, that you goes lacking—ay, an' will go, t' the grave!"

"And what, Top," the stranger sneered, "may this thing be?"

"Ye'll laugh, sir," my uncle replied, "when I tells you 'tis his love."

The man did laugh.

"For shame!" cried my uncle.

He was taking off his wraps—this stranger. They were so many that I wondered. He was a man of

quality, after all, it might be. "I tell you, Top," said he, "that the boy may be damned for all I care. I said damned. I *mean* damned. There isn't another form of words, with which I am acquainted, sufficient to express my lack of interest in this child's welfare. Do you understand me, Top? And do you realize—you obstinate noddy!—that my heart's in the word? You and I, Top, have business together. It's a dirty business. It was in the beginning; it is now—a dirty business for us both. I admit it. But can't we do it reasonably? Can't we do it alone? Why introduce this ill-born whelp? He's making trouble, Top; and he'll make more with every year he lives. Let him shift for himself, man! I care nothing about him. What was his father to me? What was his mother? Make him a cook on a trader. Make him a hand on a Labradorman. Put him before the mast on a foreign craft. What do I care? Let him go! Give him a hook and line. A paddle-punt is patrimony enough for the like of him. Will you never listen to reason? What's the lad to you? Damn him, say I! Let him—"

"For that," my uncle interrupted, in a passion, "I'll hurt ye! Come soon, come late, I'll hurt ye! Hear me?" he continued, savagely. "I'll hurt ye for them evil wishes!"

I had expected this outbreak. My uncle would not hear me damned in this cruel way without protest.

"Top," says the stranger, with a little laugh of scorn, "when *you* hurt *me*—I'll know that the chieftest knave of the St. John's water-side has turned fool!"

"When I hurts ye, man," my uncle answered, "I'll hurt ye sore!"

Again the man laughed.

"Ah, man!" my uncle growled, "but ye'll squirm for that when the time comes!"

"Come, come, Top!" says the stranger, in such a whine of terror, in such disgusting weakness and sudden withdrawal of high boasting, in such a failure of courage, that I could hardly credit the thing. "Come, come, Top!" he whined. "You'll do nothing rash, will you? Not *rash*, Top—not rash!"

"I'll make ye squirm, sir," says my uncle, "for damnin' Dannie."

"But you'll do nothing rash, man, will you?"

My uncle would not heed him.

"I'm a reasonable man, Top," the stranger protested. "You know I'm not a hard man."

They moved, now, into the dining-room, whence no word of what they said came to my ears. I listened, lying wide-eared in the dark, but heard only a rumble of voices. "And you, too—you hound!" the man had said; and 'twas spoken in the hate that forebodes murder. My uncle? what had that childlike, tender-hearted old rascal accomplished against this man to make the penalty of ungodly wrath a thing meet to the offence? "And you, too—you hound!" I lay in grave trouble and bewilderment, fearing that this strange guest might work his hate upon my uncle, in some explosion of resentment, before my arm could aid against the deed. There was no sound of laughter from below

—no hint of conviviality in the intercourse. Voices and the clink of bottle and glass: nothing mellow in the voices, nothing genial in the clink of glass—nothing friendly or hospitable. 'Twas an uneasy occupation that engaged me; no good, as I knew, came from a surly bout with a bottle of rum. 'Twas still blowing high; the windows rattled, the sea broke in thunder and venomous hissing upon the rocks, the wind screamed its complaint of obstruction; 'twas a tumultuous night, wherein, it seems to me, the passions of men are not overawed by any display of inimical power, but break restraint in evil company with the weather. The voices below, as I hearkened, rose and fell, like the gusts of a gale, falling to quiet confidences, lost in the roar of the night, swiftly rising to threat and angry counter-threat.

It ended in a cry and a crash of glass. . . .

I was by this brought out of bed and pattering down the stair to my uncle's help. It seemed they did not hear me, or, having heard, were enraged past caring who saw them in this evil case. At the door I came to a stand. There was no encounter, no movement at all, within the room; 'twas very quiet and very still. There had fallen upon the world that pregnant silence, wherein men wait appalled, which follows upon the irrevocable act of a quarrel. A bottle of rum was overturned on the table, and a glass lay in splinters on the hearth at my uncle's back, as though cast with poor aim. The place reeked with the stench of rum, which

rose from a river of liquor, overflowing the table, dripping to the floor: a foul and sinister detail, I recall, of the tableau. My uncle and the gray little man from St. John's, leaning upon their hands, the table between, faced each other all too close for peaceful issue of the broil. Beyond was my uncle's hand-lamp, where I had set it, burning serenely in this tempest of passion. The faces were silhouetted in profile against its quiet yellow light. Monstrous shadows of the antagonists were cast upon the table and ceiling. For the first time in my life I clapped eyes on the man from St. John's; but his face was in shadow—I saw dimly. 'Twas clean-shaven and gray: I could tell no more. But yet, I knew, the man was a man of some distinction—a gentleman. 'Twas a definite impression I had. There was that about him—clothes and carriage and shaven face and lean white hands—that fixed it in my memory.

I was not observed.

"Out there on the Devil's Teeth," my uncle impassively began, "when I laid hold—"

"But," the stranger protested, "I have nothing to do with that!"

"Out there on the Devil's Teeth, that night," my uncle repeated, "when the seas was breakin' over, an' the ice begin t' come, an' I laid hold o' that there Book—"

"Hear me, Top! Will you *not* hear me?"

"Out there on the Devil's Teeth," my uncle patiently reiterated, "when the crew was drownin' t' le'ward,

an' 'twas every man for his own life, an' the ice begin t' come, an' I laid hold o' that there—"

The stranger struck the table with his palm. "Hear me!" he implored. "I have nothing—nothing—to do with the Devil's Teeth!"

"Out there on the Devil's Teeth, when I took the oath—"

"You stupid fool!"

"When I took the oath," my uncle resumed, "I knowed 'twould be hard t' stand by. I knowed that, sir. I done the thing with open eyes. I'll never plead ignorance afore the Lord God A'mighty, sir, for the words I spoke that night. I've stood by, as best I could; an' I'll keep on standin' by, sir, t' the end, as best I'm able. God help me, sir!" he groaned, leaning still closer to the gray face of his enemy. "Ye think ye're in hard case, yourself, sir, don't ye? Do ye never give a thought t' *me?* Dirty business, says you, betwixt you an' me! Ay; dirty business for Nick Top. But he'll stand by; he'll stand by, sir, come what may—t' the end! I'm not complainin', mark ye! not complainin' at all. The lad's a good lad. I'm not complainin'. He've the makin's of a better man than you. Oh no! I'm not complainin'. Out there on the Devil's Teeth, that night, when the souls o' them men was goin' Aloft an' Below, accordin' t' their deserts, does ye think I was a fool? Fool! I tells ye, sir, I knowed full well I give my soul t' hell, that night, when I laid my hand on the Book an' swore that I'd stand by. An' I *will* stand by—stand by the lad, sir, t' the end! He's a

good lad—he'll make a better man than you—an' I've no word o' complaint t' say."

"The lad, the lad! Do *I* care for the lad?"

"No, God forgive ye!" my uncle cried, "not you that ought."

"That ought, you fool?"

"Ay; that ought."

The man laughed.

"I'll not have ye laugh," said my uncle, "at Dannie. Ye've tried my patience enough with scorn o' that child." He tapped the table imperatively, continuing with rising anger, and scowled in a way I had learned to take warning from. "No more o' that!" says he. "Ye've no call t' laugh at the lad."

The laughter ceased—failed ridiculously. It proved my uncle's mastery of the situation. The man might bluster, but was in a moment reduced.

"Top," said the stranger, leaning forward a little, "I have asked you a simple question: *Will* you or *won't* you?"

"I will not!"

In exasperation the man struck my uncle on the cheek.

"I'll not hurt ye for that!" said my uncle, gently. "I'll not hurt ye, man, for that!"

He was struck again. "There will come an extremity," the stranger calmly added, "when I shall find it expedient to have you assassinated."

"I'll not hurt ye for the threat," said my uncle. "But man," he cried, in savage anger, "an you keeps me from workin' my will with the lad—"

"The lad, the lad!"

"An you keeps me from workin' my will with that good lad—"

"I say to you frankly: Damn the lad!"

My uncle struck the stranger. "Ye'll mend your manners!" cried he. "Ye've forgot your obligations, but ye'll mend your manners!"

I marvelled that these men should strike each other with impunity. The like was never known before. That each should patiently bear the insult of the other! I could not make it out. 'Twas strange beyond experience. A blow—and the other cheek turned! Well enough for Christians—but my vicious uncle and this evil stranger! That night, while I watched and listened unperceived from the hall, I could not understand; but now I know that a fellowship of wickedness was signified.

"I'll not hurt you, Top," the stranger mocked, "for the blow."

My uncle laughed.

"Are you laughing, Top?" the stranger sneered. "You are, aren't you? Well," says he, "who laughs last laughs best. And I tell you, Top, though you may seem to have the best laugh now, I'll have the last. And you won't like it, Top—you won't be happy when you hear me."

My uncle laughed again. I wish he had not laughed—not in that unkind way.

"Anyhow," said the stranger, "take that with my compliments!"

'Twas a brutal blow with the closed fist. I cried out. My uncle, with the sting and humiliation of the thing to forbear, was deaf to the cry; but the gray little man from St. John's, who knew well enough he would have no buffet in return, turned, startled, and saw me. My uncle's glance instantly followed; whereupon a singular thing happened. The old man—I recall the horror with which he discovered me—swept the lamp from the table with a swing of his hand. It hurtled like a star, crashed against the wall, fell shattered and extinguished. We were in darkness—and in silence. For a long interval no word was spoken; the gale was free to noise itself upon our ears—the patter of rain, the howl of the wind, the fretful breaking of the sea.

"Dannie, lad," says my uncle, at last, "is that you?"

"Ay, sir."

"Then," says he, tenderly, "I 'low you'd best be t' bed. I'm feared you'll be cotchin' cold, there in the draught, in your night-gown. Ye're so wonderful quick, lad, t' cotch cold."

"I've come, sir," says I, "t' your aid."

The stranger tittered.

"T' your aid, sir!" I shouted, defiantly.

"I'm not needin' ye, Dannie. Ye're best in bed. 'Tis so wonderful late. I 'low ye'll be havin' the croup again, lad, an you don't watch out. An' ye mustn't have the croup; ye really mustn't! Remember the last time, Dannie, an' beware. Ah, now! ye'll never have the croup an ye can help it. Think," he plead-

ed, "o' the hot-water cloths, an' the fear ye put me to. An' Dannie," he added, accusingly, "ye know the ipecac is all runned out!"

"I'll stand by, sir," says I.

"'Tis kind o' you!" my uncle exclaimed, with infinite graciousness and affection. "'Tis wonderful kind! An' I'm glad ye're kind t' me now—with my ol' shipmate here. But you isn't needed, lad; so do you go t' bed like the good b'y that you is. Go t' bed, Dannie, God bless ye!—go t' bed, an' go t' sleep."

"Ay," I complained; "but I'm not wantin' t' leave ye with this man."

"True, an' I'm proud of it," says he; "but I've no means o' curin' the croup. An' Dannie," says he, "I'm more feared o' the croup than o' the devil. Do you go t' bed."

"I'll go," I answered, "an you wills it."

'Twas very dark in the dining-room; there was no sight of the geometrical gentlemen on that geometrically tempestuous sea to stay a lad in his defiance.

"Good lad!" said my uncle. "God bless ye!"

On the landing above I encountered my tutor, half-dressed, a candle in hand. 'Twas a queer figure he cut, thinks I—an odd, inconsequent figure in a mysterious broil of the men of our kind. What was this cockney—this wretched alien—when the passions of our coast were stirring? He would be better in bed. An eye he had—age-wise ways and a glance to overawe my youth—but what was he, after all, in such a case as this? I was his master, however unlearned I

might be; his elder and master, to be sure, in a broil of our folk. Though to this day I respect the man for his manifold virtues, forgetting in magnanimity his failings, I cannot forgive his appearance on that night: the candle, the touselled hair, the disarray, the lean legs of him! "What's all this?" he demanded. "I can't sleep. What's all this about? Is it a burglar?"

It made me impatient—and no wonder!

"What's this, you know?" he repeated. "Eh? What's all this row?"

"Do you go t' bed!" I commanded, with a stamp, quite out of temper. "Ye're but a child! Ye've no hand in this!"

He was dutiful. . . .

By-and-by my uncle came to my room. He would not enter, but stood at the door, in much embarrassment, all the while looking at the flame of his candle. "Dannie, lad," he inquired, at last, "is you comfortable?"

"Ay, sir," says I.

"An' happy?"

"Ay, sir."

"An' is you content," says he, "all alone with ol' Nick Top at Twist Tickle?"

I was content.

"You isn't upsot, is you, by the capers o' my ol' shipmate?"

I answered as he wished. "No, sir," said I.

"Oh no," says he; "no need o' bein' upsot by

that ol' bully. He've wonderful queer ways, I'll not deny, but ye're not in the way o' knowin', Dannie, that he've not a good heart. I 'low ye'll maybe take to un, lad—when you comes t' know un better. I hopes ye will. I hopes ye'll find it easy t' deal with un. They's no need *now* o' bein' upsot; oh my, no! But, Dannie, an I was you," says he, a bit hopelessly, "times bein' what they is, an' life uncertain—an I was you, lad—afore I went t' sleep I—I—I 'low I'd overhaul that there twenty-third psa'm!"

He went away then. . . .

XII

NEED O' HASTE

WHEN I awoke 'twas to a gray morning. The wind had fallen to half a gale for stout craft—continuing in the east, the rain gone out of it. Fog had come upon the islands at dawn; 'twas now everywhere settled thick—the hills lost to sight, the harbor water black and illimitable, the world all soggy and muffled. There was a great noise of breakers upon the seaward rocks. A high sea running without (they said); but yet my uncle had manned a trap-skiff at dawn (said they) to put a stranger across to Topmast Point. A gentleman 'twas (said they)—a gray little man with a red mole at the tip of his nose, who had lain the night patiently enough at Skipper Eli Flack's, but must be off at break o' day, come what might, to board the outside boat for St. John's at Topmast Harbor. He had gone in high good-humor; crackin' off along o' Skipper Nick (said Eli) like he'd knowed un all his life. An' Nick? why, ecod! Nick was crackin' off, too. Never *knowed* such crackin' off atween strangers. You could hear the crew laughin' clear t' the narrows. 'Twould be a lovely cruise! Rough passage, t' be sure; but Nick could take a skiff

through *that!* An' Nick would *drive* her, ecod! you'd see ol' Nick wing it back through the narrows afore the night was down if the wind held easterly. *He'd* be the b'y t' put she to it!

I scanned the sky and sea.

"Ay," quoth Eli, of the gale; "she haven't spit out all she've got. She quit in a temper, at dawn," says he, "an' she'll be back afore night t' ease her mind."

'Twas a dismal prospect for my uncle.

"But 'twould be a clever gale at flirtin'," Eli added, for my comfort, "that could delude an' overcome ol' Nick!"

My tutor would go walking upon the roads and heads of our harbor (said he) to learn of this new world into which he had come in the dark. 'Twas gray and windy and dripping on the hills; but I led him (though his flimsy protection against the weather liked me not) over the Whisper Cove road to the cliffs of Tom Tulk's Head, diligently exercising, as we went, for my profit and his befitting entertainment, all the Chesterfieldian phrases 'twas in me to recall. 'Twas easy to perceive his delight in this manner of speech: 'twas a thing so manifest, indeed, such was the exuberance of his laughter and so often did he clap me on the back, that I was fairly abashed by the triumph, and could not for the life of me continue, but must descend, for lack of spirit, to the common tongue of our folk, which did him well enough, after all, it seemed. It pleased him mightily to be set on the crest and brink of that great cliff, high in the mist, the gray wind blowing by, the black sea careering

from an ambush of fog to break in wrathful assault upon the grim rocks below. 'Twas amazing: the slender figure drawn in glee to breast the gale, the long arms opened to the wind, the rapt, dark face, the flashing eyes, the deep, eager breaths like sighs of rapture. A rhapsody: the rush and growl and frown of the world (said he)—the sombre colors, the veil of mist, the everlasting hills, rising in serenity above the turmoil and evanescent rage. To this I listened in wonder. I had not for myself discovered these beauties; but thereafter, because of this teaching, I kept watch.

Came, then, out of the mist, Judith, upon accustomed business. "Dannie, lad," she asked me, not shy of the stranger, because of woful anxiety, "you've not seed my mother hereabouts, is you?"

I grieved that I had not.

"She've been gone," said Judith, with a helpless glance, sweeping the sombre, veiled hills, "since afore dawn. I waked at dawn, Dannie, an' she were gone from the bed—an' I isn't been able t' find she, somehow. She've wandered off—she've wandered off again —in her way."

I would help, said I.

"You're kind, Dannie," said she. "Ay, God's sake, lad! you're wondrous kind—t' me."

My tutor tipped the sad little face, as though by right and propriety admitted long ago, and for a moment looked unabashed into Judith's eyes — an engaging glance, it seemed, for Judith was left unresisting and untroubled by it. They were eyes, now, speaking

anxious fear and weariness and motherly concern, the brows drawn, the tragic little shadows, lying below, very wide and blue.

"You are a pretty child," said my tutor, presently; "you have very beautiful eyes, have you not? But you knew it long ago, of course," he added, smiling in a way most captivating, "didn't you?"

"No, sir."

I remember the day—the mist and wind and clamoring sea and solemn hills, the dour, ill-tempered world wherein we were, our days as grass (saith the psalmist). Ay, an' 'tis so. I remember the day: the wet moss underfoot; the cold wind, blowing as it listed; the petulant sea, wreaking an ancient enmity, old and to continue beyond our span of feeling; the great hills of Twin Islands hid in mist, but yet watching us; the clammy fog embracing us, three young, unknowing souls. I shall not forget—cannot forget—the moment of that first meeting of the maid Judith with John Cather. 'Twas a sombre day, as he had said—ay, a troubled sea, a gray, cold, sodden earth!

"And has nobody told you that you were pretty?" my tutor ran on, in pleasant banter.

She would not answer; but shyly, in sweet self-consciousness, looked down.

"No?" he insisted.

She was too shy of him to say.

"Not even one?" he persisted, tipping up the blushing little face. "Not even one?"

I thought it very bold.

"Come, now," says he. "There is a boy. You are so very pretty, you know. You are so very, very pretty. There must be a boy—a sweetheart. Surely there is at least one lad of taste at Twist Tickle. There is a sweetheart; there must be a sweetheart. I spell it with a D!" cries he, triumphantly, detecting the horrified glance that passed between Judy and me. And he clapped me on the back, and stroked Judith's tawny hair, his hand bold, winning; and he laughed most heartily. "His name," says he, "is Daniel!"

"Yes, sir," said Judith, quite frankly.

My tutor laughed again; and I was glad that he did—in that kind way. I was glad—'twas a flush of warm feeling—that my tutor and Judith were at once upon terms of understanding. I was glad that Judith smiled, glad that she looked again, with favor, in interested speculation, into the dark eyes which smiled back at her again. I would have them friends—'twas according to my plan. . . .

At mid-day the wrath of the sea began to fail. The racing lop, the eager, fuming crests—a black-and-white confusion beneath the quiet, gray fog—subsided into reasonableness. 'Twas wild enough, wind and sea, beyond the tickle rocks; but still 'twas fishing weather and water for the courageous.

The fool of Twist Tickle came to our gate. "Mother always 'lowed," says he, "that when a man *could* he *ought* t'; an' mother knowed."

"You're never bound out, Moses!"

"Well," he drawled, "mother always 'lowed that when a man *could* pick up a scattered fish an' *wouldn't*, he were a mean sort o' coward."

"An' you'll be takin' *me?*"

"I was 'lowin'," he answered, "that us *might* get out an' back an us tried."

'Twas a brave prospect. Beyond the tickle in a gale o wind! 'Twas irresistible—to be accomplished with the fool of Twist Tickle and his clever punt. I left the pottering Cather to put ship-shape his cabin (as he now called it) for himself—a rainy-day occupation for aliens. In high delight I put out with Moses Shoos to the Off-and-On grounds. Man's work, this! 'Twas hard sailing for a hook-and-line punt—the reel and rush and splash of it—but an employment the most engaging. 'Twas worse fishing in the toss and smother of the grounds; but 'twas a thrilling reward when the catch came flopping overside—the spoil of a doughty foray. We fished a clean half-quintal; then, late in the day, a rising wind caught us napping in Hell Alley. It came on to blow from the east with fury. There was no beating up to the tickle in the teeth of it; 'twas a task beyond the little punt, drive her to it as we would. When dusk came—dusk fast turning the fog black—the fool turned tail and wisely ran for Whisper Cove. 'Twas dark when we moored the punt to the stage-head: a black night come again, blowing wildly with rain—great gusts of wind threshing the trees above, screaming from cliff to cliff. There were lights at Judith's: 'twas straightway in our minds to ask a cup of tea in her

kitchen; but when we came near the door 'twas to the discovery of company moving in and out.

There were women in the kitchen.

"'Tis Judith's mother, Dannie," Aunt Esther All whispered. "'Tis on'y she. 'Tis on'y Elizabeth."

We had found her on the hills that morning.

"She've come t' die all of a suddent. 'Tis another of her spells. Oh, Lord! she've come t' die."

There was no solemnity in this outer room.

"She've woful need o' salvation," Aunt Esther pattered. "She's doomed, lad, an she doesn't repent. Parson Stump ought t' be fetched t' work on she."

There was grief—somewhere there was grief. I heard a sob; it came from a child's breast. And there followed, then, some strange, rambling words of comfort in Elizabeth's voice — a plea, it was, to never mind. Again a sob—Judith's grief.

"'Tis Judith," Aunt Esther sighed. "She've gone an' give way."

The child's heart would break!

"Mother always 'lowed, Dannie," Moses whispered, "that they ought t' be a parson handy—when It come."

'Twas beyond the power of the fool to manage: who was now a fool, indeed—white and shivering in this Presence. I would fetch the parson, said I — and moved right willingly and in haste upon the errand. Aunt Esther followed me beyond the threshold. She caught my arm with such a grasp that I was brought up in surprise. We stood in the wind and rain. The light from the kitchen fell through the doorway into

the black night. Aunt Esther's lean, brown face, as the lamp betrayed, was working with eager and shameless curiosity. They had wondered, these women of Whisper Cove, overlong and without patience, to know what they wished to know but could not discover. "She've been wantin' Skipper Nicholas," says she. "She've been callin' for Skipper Nicholas. She've been singin' out, Dannie, like a wretch in tarture. Tell un t' come. She've been wantin' un sore. She've a thing on her mind. Tell un not t' fail. 'Tis something she've t' tell un. 'I wants Skipper Nicholas!' says she. 'Fetch Nicholas! I wants a word with he afore I die.' Hist!" Aunt Esther added, as though imparting some delight, "I 'low 'tis the secret."

I asked her concerning this secret.

"It haves t' do," says she, "with Judith."

"An' what's that?"

She whispered.

"For shame!" I cried.

"Ay, but," says she, "you isn't a woman!"

"'Tis gossips' employment, woman!"

"'Tis a woman's wish t' know," she answered.

The thing concerned Judith: I was angered. . . .

And now the door was shut in my face. 'Twas opened—closed again. The fool fled past me to his own place—scared off by the footsteps of Death, in the way of all fools. I was in haste—all at once—upon the road from Whisper Cove to Twist Tickle in a screaming gale of wind and rain. I was in Judith's service: I

made haste. 'Twas a rough road, as I have said—a road scrambling among forsaken hills, a path made by chance, narrow and crooked, wind-swept or walled by reaching alders and spruce limbs, which were wet and cold and heavy with the drip of the gale. Ah, but was I not whipped on that night by the dark and the sweeping rain and the wind on the black hills and the approach of death? I was whipped on, indeed! The road was perverse to hurrying feet: 'twas ill going for a crooked foot; but I ran—splashing through the puddles, stumbling over protruding rock, crawling over the hills—an unpitying course. Why did the woman cry out for my uncle? What would she confide? Was it, indeed, but the name of the man? Was it not more vital to Judith's welfare, imperatively demanding disclosure? I hastened. Was my uncle at home? For Elizabeth's peace at this dread pass I hoped he had won through the gale. In rising anxiety I ran faster. I tripped upon a root and went tumbling down Lovers' Hill, coming to in a muddy torrent from Tom Tulk's Head. Thereafter—a hundred paces—I caught sight of the lights of the Twist Tickle meeting-house. They glowed warm and bright in the scowling night that encompassed me. . . .

'Twas district-meeting time at Twist Tickle. The parsons of our Bay were gathered to devise many kindnesses for our folk — the salvation of souls and the nourishment of bodies and the praise of the God of us all. 'Twas in sincerity they came—there's no disputing

it—and in loving-kindness, however ingenuously, they sought our welfare. When I came from the unkind night into the light and warmth of that plain temple, Parson Lute, of Yellow Tail Tickle, whom I knew and loved, was seeking to persuade the shepherds of our souls that the spread of saving grace might surely be accomplished, from Toad Point to the Scarlet Woman's Head, by means of unmitigated doctrine and more artful discourse. He was a youngish man, threadbare and puckered of garment—a quivering little aggregation of bones and blood-vessels, with a lean, lipless, high-cheeked face, its pale surface splashed with freckles; green eyes, red-rimmed, the lashes sparse and white; wide, restless nostrils. "Brethren," said he, with a snap of the teeth, his bony hand clinched and shaking above his gigantic head, "con-*vict* 'em! Anyhow. In any way. By any means. *Save* 'em! That's what we want in the church. Beloved," he proceeded, his voice dropping to a hissing whisper, "save 'em. *Con*-vict 'em!" His head shot forward; 'twas a red, bristly head, with the hair growing low on the brow, like the spruce of an overhanging cliff. "It's the only *way*," he concluded, "to save 'em!" He sat down. "I'm hungry for souls!" he shouted from his seat, as an afterthought; and 'twas plain he would have said more had not a spasmodic cough put an end to his ecstasy.

"Praise God!" they said.

"'Low I got a cold," Parson Lute gasped, his voice changed now by the weakness of an ailing man.

I feared to interrupt; but still must boldly knock.

"One moment, brethren!" Parson Stump apologized. "Ah, Daniel!" he cried; "is that you? What's amiss, boy? You've no trouble, have you? And your uncle —eh? you've no trouble, boy, have you?" The brethren waited in silence while he tripped lightly over the worn cocoanut matting to the rear—perturbed, a little frown of impatience and bewilderment gathering between his eyes. The tails of his shiny black coat brushed the varnished pine pews, whereto, every Sunday, the simple folk of our harbor repaired in faith. Presently he tripped back again. The frown of bewilderment was deeper now—the perturbation turned anxious. For a moment he paused before the brethren. "Very awkward," said he, at last. "Really, I'm very sorry." He scratched his head, fore and aft—bit his lip. "I'm called to Whisper Cove," he explained, pulling at his nose. "I'm sorry to interrupt the business of the meeting, just at this time, but I do not see how it can be got around. I s'pose we'd better adjourn until such a time as I—"

The chairman would hear of no adjournment.

"But," Parson Stump complained, "I'm the secretary!"

"We'll go right on, brother."

"I can't very well *stay*, brethren," said Parson Stump, chagrined. "It's a case of—of—of spiritual consolation."

"Ah!" ejaculated Parson Lute.

"And I—"

"Now, Brother Wile," the chairman interrupted, "we're ready to hear *you*."

"One moment," said Parson Lute, rising. He struggled to suppress his cough. "Excuse me," he gasped. And, "I don't quite see, brethren," he proceeded, "how this meeting can get along without the services of Brother Stump. It seems to me that this meeting *needs* Brother Stump. I am of opinion that Brother Stump owes it to the cause in general, and to the clergy of this district in particular, to report this discussion to the conference. It is my conviction, brethren, that Brother Stump—by his indefatigable industry, by his thorough acquaintance with the matters under discussion, by his spiritual insight into problems of this character, by his talent for expression—ought to be present through the whole of this discussion, in its entirety, and ought to present the views of this body to the conference *in person*." And, "Look here, Brother Stump," he concluded, turning, "why can't *I* make this call for you?"

"Well, of course, you *could*, Brother Lute," Parson Stump admitted, his face beginning to clear, "but really I—"

"Oh, come now, brother!"

"Brother Lute," said Parson Stump, with sincere affection, "I don't like to think of you on the road to Whisper Cove to-night. I tell you, it—it—goes against the grain. You're not well, brother. You're not well at all. And it's a long way—and there's a gale of wind and rain outside—"

"Come, come, now!"

"A *dirty* night," Parson Stump mused.

"But it's the Lord's business!"

"Of course," Parson Stump yielded, "if you *would* be so kind, I—"

Parson Lute's face brightened. "Very well," said he. "It's all settled. Now, may I have a word with you? I'll need some pointers." To the five brethren: "One moment, brethren!"

They moved towards the rear, and came to rest, heads close, within my hearing. Parson Lute put his arm over Parson Stump's shoulder. "Now," said he, briskly, rubbing his hands in a business-like way, "pointers, brother—pointers!"

"Yes, yes, brother!" Parson Stump agreed. "Well, you'll find my oil-skins hanging in the hall. Mrs. Stump will give you the lantern—"

"No, no! I don't mean that. Who is this person? Man or woman?"

"Maid," said Parson Stump.

"Ah!"

Parson Stump whispered in Parson Lute's ear. Parson Lute raised his eyebrows. He was made sad—and sighed. He was kind, was this parson, and sweetly wishful for the goodness and welfare of all the erring sons and daughters of men.

"Has the woman repented?" he asked.

"I fear not. In fact—no; she has not."

At once the battle-light began to shine in Parson Lute's green eyes. "I see," he snapped.

"Rather difficult case, I fear," said Parson Stump, despondently. "She—well, she—she isn't quite right. Poor creature! Do you understand? A simple person.

Not idiotic, you know. Not born that way, of course. Oh no! born with all her senses *quite* intact. She was beautiful as a maid—sweet-natured, lovely in person, very modest and pious—very merry, too, and clever. But before the child came she—she—she began to wait. Do you understand? To wait—to wait for the return of—of some one. She said—I remember that she said—that he would come. She was really quite sure of it. And she waited—and waited. A promise, no doubt; and she had faith in it. For a long time she had faith in it. Rather pitiful, I think. I used to see her about a good deal. She was always waiting. I would meet her on the heads, in all weathers, keeping watch for schooners. The clerk of a trading-schooner, no doubt; but nobody knows. Waiting—waiting—always waiting! Poor creature! The man didn't come back, of course; and then she got—well—flighty. Got flighty—quite flighty. The man didn't come back, of course, you know; and she had waited—and waited—so long, so very long. Really, a very difficult case, brother! Something snapped and broken—something missing—something gone, you know. Poor creature! She — she — well, she waited too long. Couldn't *stand* it, you see. It seems she loved the man—and trusted him—and, well, just loved him, you know, in the way women will. And now she's flighty—*quite* flighty. A difficult case, I fear, and—"

"I see," Parson Lute interrupted. "An interesting case. Very sad, too. And you've not been able to convict her of her sin?"

Parson Stump shook his head.

"No impression whatever?"

"No, brother."

"How," Parson Lute demanded, with a start, "does she—ah—subsist?"

"She fishes, brother, in quiet weather, and she is helped, though it is not generally known, by a picturesque old character of the place—a man not of the faith, a drunkard, I fear, but kind-hearted and generous to the needy."

"The woman ever converted before?"

"Twice, brother," Parson Stump answered; "but not now in a state of grace. She is quite obstinate," he added, "and she has, I fear, peculiar views—*very* peculiar, I fear—on repentance. In fact, she loves the child, you see; and she fears that a confession of her sin—a confession of repentance, you know—might give the world to think that her love had failed—that she wished the child—well—unborn. She would not appear disloyal to Judith, I fear, even to save her soul. A peculiar case, is it not? A difficult case, I fear."

"I see," said Parson Lute, tapping his nose reflectively. "The child is the obstacle. A valuable hint in that. Well, I may be able to do something, with God's help."

"God bless you, brother!"

They shook hands. . . .

My uncle was returned from Topmast Harbor. I paused but to bid him urgently to the bedside of Eliza-

beth, then ran on to rejoin the parson at the turn of the road. By night, in a gale of wind and rain from the east, was no time for Parson Lute, of Yellow Tail Tickle, to be upon the long road to Whisper Cove. But the rough road, and the sweep of the wind, and the steep ascents, and the dripping limbs, and the forsaken places lying hid in the dark, and the mud and torrents, and the knee-deep, miry puddles seemed not to be perceived by him as he stumbled after me. He was praying aloud—importunately, as it is written. He would save the soul of Elizabeth, that man; the faith, the determination were within him. 'Twas fair pitiful the way he besought the Lord. And he made haste; he would pause only at the crests of the hills—to cough and to catch his breath. I was hard driven that night—straight into the wind, with the breathless parson forever at my heels. I shall never forget the exhibition of zeal. 'Twas divinely unselfish—'twas heroic as men have seldom shown heroism. Remembering what occurred thereafter, I number the misguided man with the holy martyrs. At the Cock's Crest, whence the road tumbled down the cliff to Whisper Cove, the wind tore the breath out of Parson Lute, and the noise of the breakers, and the white of the sea beyond, without mercy, contemptuous, confused him utterly.

He fell.

"'Tis near at hand, sir!" I pleaded with him.

He was up in a moment. "Let us press on, Daniel," said he, "to the salvation of that soul. Let us press on!"

We began the descent. . . .

XIII

JUDITH ABANDONED

I LEFT the parson in the kitchen to win back his breath. He was near fordone, poor man! but still entreatingly prayed, in sentences broken by consumptive spasms, for wisdom and faith and the fire of the Holy Ghost in this dire emergency. When I entered the room where Elizabeth lay, 'twas to the grateful discovery that she had rallied: her breath came without wheeze or gasp; the labored, spasmodic beating of her heart no longer shook the bed. 'Twas now as though, I thought, they had troubled her with questions concerning her soul or her sin; for she was turned sullen—lying rigid and scowling, with her eyes fixed upon the whitewashed rafters, straying only in search of Judith, who sat near, grieving in dry sobs, affrighted.

And 'twas said that this Elizabeth had within the span of my short life been a maid most lovely! There were no traces of that beauty and sprightliness remaining. I wondered, being a lad, that unkindness should work a change so sad in any one. 'Twas a mystery. . . . The room was cold. 'Twas ghostly, too—with Death hovering there invisible. Youth is mystified

and appalled by the gaunt Thing. I shivered. Within, the gale sighed and moaned and sadly whispered; 'twas blowing in a melancholy way—foreboding some inevitable catastrophe. Set on a low ledge of the cliff, the cottage sagged towards the edge, as if to peer at the breakers; and clammy little draughts stole through the cracks of the floor and walls, crying as they came, and crept about, searching out the uttermost corners, with sighs and cold fingers.

'Twas a mean, poor place for a woman to lie in extremity. . . . And she had once been lovely—with warm, live youth, with twinkling eyes and modesty, with sympathy and merry ways to win the love o' folk! Ay; but 'twas wondrous hard to believe. . . . 'Twas a mean station of departure, indeed—a bare, disjointed box of a room, low-ceiled, shadowy, barren of comfort, but yet white and neat, kept by Judith's clever, conscientious, loving hands. There was one small window, outlooking to sea, black-paned in the wild night, whipped with rain and spray. From without—from the vastness of sea and night—came a confused and distant wail, as of the lamentation of a multitude. Was this my fancy? I do not know; but yet it seemed to me—a lad who listened and watched—that a wise, pitying, unnumbered throng lamented.

I could not rid my ears of this wailing. . . .

Elizabeth had rallied; she might weather it out, said the five wives of Whisper Cove, who had gathered to observe her departure.

"If," Aunt Esther qualified, "she's let *be*."

"Like she done las' time," William Buttle's wife whispered. "I 'low our watchin's wasted. Ah, this heart trouble! You never knows."

"*If*," Aunt Esther repeated, "she's let be."

We waited for the parson.

"Have Skipper Nicholas come?" Elizabeth asked.

"No, maid; 'tis not he, maid." They would still taunt her! They would still taunt her, in the way of virtuous women; 'twas "Maid! Maid!" until the heart of a man of honor—of a man of any sort—was fair sickened of virtue and women. "'Tis the parson," said they.

Elizabeth sighed. "I wants a word along o' Skipper Nicholas," said she, faintly, "when he've come."

Parson Lute softly entered from the kitchen, wiping the rain from his face and hands, stepping on tiptoe over the bare floor. He was worn and downcast. No inspiration, it seemed, had been granted in answer to his praying. I loved him, of old, as did all the children of Twist Tickle, to whom he was known because of gentlest sympathy, shown on the roads in fair weather and foul at district-meeting time; and I was glad that he had come to ease the passage to heaven of the mother of Judith. The five women of Whisper Cove, taken unaware by this stranger, stood in a flutter of embarrassment. They were not unkind—they were curious concerning death and the power of parsons. He laid a kind hand on Judith's head, shook hands with the women, and upon each bestowed a whispered

blessing, being absently said; and the wives of Whisper Cove sat down and smoothed their skirts and folded their hands, all flushed and shaking with expectation. They wondered, no doubt, what he would accomplish —salvation or not: Parson Stump had failed. Parson Lute seemed for a moment to be unnerved by the critical attitude of his audience—made anxious for his reputation: a purely professional concern, inevitably habitual. He was not conscious of this, I am sure; he was too kind, too earnest in service, to consider his reputation. But yet he must *do*—when another had failed. The Lord had set him a hard task; but being earnest and kind, he had no contempt, no lack of love, I am sure, for the soul the Lord had given him to lose or to save—neither gross wish to excel, nor gross wish to excuse.

"Daughter," he whispered, tenderly, to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth threw the coverlet over her head, so that only the tangled fringe of her hair was left to see; and she began to laugh—a coquettish trifling. Parson Lute gently uncovered the head.

"You isn't Parson Stump," Elizabeth tittered.

"Turn your face this way," said Parson Lute.

She laughed.

"This way," said Parson Lute.

"Go 'way!" Elizabeth laughed. "Go on with you!" She hid her flaming face. "You didn't ought t' see me in bed!" she gasped. "Go 'way!"

"My child," said Parson Lute, patiently, "turn your face this way."

She would not. "Go 'way!" said she.

"This way!" Parson Lute repeated.

It had been a quiet, slow command, not to go unheeded. The five women of Whisper Cove stiffened with amazement. Here, indeed, was a masterful parson! Parson Stump had failed; but not this parson—not this parson, who could command in the name of the Lord! They exchanged glances—exchanged nudges. Elizabeth's laughter ceased. All the women of Whisper Cove waited breathless. There was silence; the commotion was all outside—wind and rain and breakers, a far-off passion, apart from the poor comedy within. The only sound in the room was the wheezing of the girl on the bed. Elizabeth turned; her brows were drawn, her eyes angry. Aunt Esther All, from her place at the foot of the bed, heard the ominous wheeze of her breath and observed the labor of her heart; and she was concerned, and nudged William Buttle's wife, who would not heed her.

"'Tis not good for her," Aunt Esther whispered.

"You leave me be!" Elizabeth complained.

Parson Lute took her hand.

"You quit that!" said Elizabeth.

"Hush, daughter," the parson pleaded.

Into the interval of silence a gust of rain intruded.

"Have Nicholas come?" Elizabeth asked. "Haven't he come yet?"

Aunt Esther shook her head.

"I wants un," said Elizabeth, "when he've come."

The parson began now soothingly to stroke the great,

rough hand he held; but at once Elizabeth broke into bashful laughter, and he dropped it—and frowned.

"Woman," he cried, in distress, "don't you know that you are dying?"

Elizabeth's glance ran to Judith, who rose, but sat again, wringing her hands. The mother turned once more to the parson; 'twas an apathetic gaze, fixed upon his restless nostrils.

"How is it with your soul?" he asked.

'Twas a word spoken most graciously, in the perfection of pious desire, of reverence, of passionate concern for the future of souls; but yet Elizabeth's glance moved swiftly to the parson's eyes, in a rage, and instantly shifted to his red hair, where it remained, fascinated.

"Are you trusting in your Saviour's love?"

I accuse myself for speaking, in this bold way, of the unhappy question; but yet, why not? for 'twas asked in purest anxiety, in the way of Parson Lute, whom all children loved.

"Are you clinging," says he, "to the Cross?"

Elizabeth listlessly stared at the rafters.

"Have you laid hold on the only Hope of escape?"

The child Judith—whose grief was my same agony—sobbed heart-brokenly.

"Judith!" Elizabeth called, her apathy vanished. "Poor little Judith!"

"No, my daughter," the parson gently protested. "This is not the time," said he. "Turn your heart away from these earthly affections," he pleaded, his

voice fallen to an earnest whisper. "Oh, daughter, fix your eyes upon the Cross!"

Elizabeth was sullen. "I wants Judith," she complained.

"You have no time, now, my daughter, to think of these perishing human ties."

"I *wants* Judith!"

"Mere earthly affection, daughter! 'And if a man'—"

"An' Judith," the woman persisted, "wants *me!*"

"Nay," the parson softly chided. He was kind—patient with her infirmity. 'Twas the way of Parson Lute. With gentleness, with a tactful humoring, he would yet win her attention. But, "Oh," he implored, as though overcome by a flooding realization of the nature and awful responsibility of his mission, "can you not think of your soul?"

"Judith, dear!"

The child arose.

"No!" said the parson, quietly. "No, child!"

The wind shook the house to its crazy foundations and drove the crest of a breaker against the panes.

"I wants t' *tell* she, parson!" Elizabeth wailed. "An' I wants she—jus' *wants* she—anyhow—jus' for love!"

"Presently, daughter; not now."

"She—she's my *child!*"

"Presently, daughter."

Judith wept again.

"Sir!" Elizabeth gasped—bewildered, terrified.

"Not now, daughter."

All the anger and complaint had gone out of Elizabeth's eyes; they were now filled with wonder and apprehension. Flashes of intelligence appeared and failed and came again. It seemed to me, who watched, that in some desperate way, with her broken mind, she tried to solve the mystery of this refusal. Then 'twas as though some delusion—some terror of her benighted state—seized upon her: alarm changed to despair; she rose in bed, but put her hand to her heart and fell back.

"He better stop it!" Aunt Esther All muttered.

The four wives of Whisper Cove bitterly murmured against her.

"He's savin' her soul," said William Buttle's wife.

They were interested, these wives, in the operation; they resented disturbance.

"Well," Aunt Esther retorted, "I 'low, anyhow, he don't know much about heart-trouble."

Parson Lute, unconscious of this watchful observation, frankly sighed. The hearts of men, I know, contain no love more sweet and valuable than that which animated his desire. He mused for an interval. "Do you know the portion of the wicked?" he asked, in loving-kindness, without harshness whatsoever.

"Yes, sir."

"What is it?"

It seemed she would appease him. She was ingratiating, now, with smile and answer. "Hell, sir," she answered.

"Are you prepared for the change?"

'Twas a familiar question, no doubt. Elizabeth's conversion had been diligently sought. But the lean face of Parson Lute, and the fear of what he might do, and the solemn quality of his voice, and his sincere and simple desire seemed so to impress Elizabeth that she was startled into new attention.

"Yes, sir," she said.

It appeared to puzzle Parson Lute. He had been otherwise informed by Parson Stump. The woman was *not* in a state of grace.

"You have cast yourself upon the mercy of God?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Then how, my daughter, can you say that you are prepared?"

There was no answer.

"You have made your peace with an offended God?"

"No, sir."

"But you say that you are prepared?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have repented of your sin?"

"No, sir."

Parson Lute turned impatient. "And yet," he demanded, "you expect to go to heaven?"

"No, sir."

"*What!*" cried Parson Lute.

"No, sir," she said.

Parson Lute was incredulous. "To hell?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"To *hell?*"

Elizabeth hesitated. By some direct and primitively human way her benighted mind had reached its determination. But still she hesitated—frightened somewhat, it may be, by the conventionality of Whisper Cove and Twist Tickle.

"Yes, sir," said she. "Most men goes there."

"But you," said he, in amaze, "are not a man!"

"Judith's father were," she answered; "an' I'm wantin'—oh, I'm wantin'—t' see un once again!"

The five wives of Whisper Cove gasped. . . .

The outer door was flung open. Came a rush of wind—the noise and wet and lusty stirring of the night. It broke harshly in upon us; 'twas a crashing discord of might and wrath and cruel indifference—a mocking of this small tragedy. The door was sharply closed against the gale. I heard the wheeze and tread of my uncle in the kitchen. He entered—his broad face grave and anxious and grieved—but instantly fled, though I beckoned; for Parson Lute, overcome, it may be, by the impiety of Elizabeth, was upon his knees, fervently praying that the misguided soul might yet by some miraculous manifestation of grace be restored to propriety of view and of feeling. 'Twas a heartfelt prayer. offered in faith, according to the enlightenment of the man—a confession of ignorance, a plea of human weakness, a humble, anxious cry for divine guidance that the woman might be plucked as a brand from the burning, to the glory of the Lord God Most Tender and Most High. Came, in the midst of it, a furious out-

burst; the wind rose — achieved its utmost pitch of power. I looked out: Whisper Cove, low between the black barriers, was churned white; and beyond—concealed by the night—the sea ran tumultuously. 'Twas a big, screaming wind, blowing in from the sea, unopposed by tree or hill. The cottage trembled to the gusts; the timbers complained; the lamp fluttered in the draught. Great waves, rolling in from the open, were broken on the rocks of Whisper Cove. Rain and spray, driven by the gale, drummed on the roof and rattled like hail on the window. And above this angry clamor of wind and sea rose the wailing, importunate prayer for the leading of the God of us all. . . .

When the parson had got to his feet again, Aunt Esther All diffidently touched his elbow. "Nicholas have come, sir," said she.

"Nicholas?"

"Ay; the man she've sent for."

Elizabeth caught the news. "I wants un," she wheezed. "Go 'way, parson! I wants a word along o' Nicholas all alone."

"She've a secret, sir," Aunt Esther whispered.

Judith moved towards the door; but the parson beckoned her back, and she stood doubtfully.

"Mister Top! Mister Top!" Elizabeth called, desperate to help herself, to whom no heed was given.

In the fury of the gale—the rush past of wind and rain—the failing voice was lost.

"I 'low," Aunt Esther warned, "'twould be wise, sir—"

"Have the man wait in the kitchen."

Elizabeth lay helplessly whimpering.

"But, sir," Aunt Esther protested, "she've—"

"Have the man wait in the kitchen," the parson impatiently repeated. "There is no time now for these worldly arrangements. No, no!" said he. "There is no time. The woman *must* be convicted!" He was changed: despondency had vanished—humility gone with it. In the eye of the man—the gesture—the risen voice—appeared some high authority to overawe us. He had the habit of authority, as have all parsons; but there was now some compelling, supernatural addition to weaken us. We did not dare oppose him, not one of us—not my uncle, whose head had been intruded, but was now at once withdrawn. The parson had come out of his prayer, it seemed, refreshed and inspired; he had remembered, it may be, that the child was the obstacle—the child whom Elizabeth would not slight to save her soul. "The woman must be saved," said he. "She must be saved!" he cried, striking his fist into his palm, his body all tense, his teeth snapped shut, his voice strident. "The Lord is mighty and merciful — a forgiving God." 'Twas an appeal (he looked far past the whitewashed rafters and the moving darkness of the night); 'twas a returning appeal—a little failure of faith, I think. "The Lord has heard me," he declared, doggedly. "He has not turned away. The woman must—she *shall*—be saved!"

"Ay, but," Aunt Esther expostulated; "she've been sort o' wantin' t' tell—"

The parson's green eyes were all at once bent in a penetrating way upon Aunt Esther; and she backed away, biting at her nails—daring no further protest.

"Judith, my child," said the parson, "do you go to the kitchen."

"No, no!" Judith wailed. "I'm wantin' t' stay."

Elizabeth stretched out her arms.

"It distracts your mother's attention, you see," said the parson, kindly. "Do you go, my dear."

"I *will* not go!"

"Judith!" Elizabeth called.

The parson caught the child's arm.

"You leave me be!" Judith flashed, her white little teeth all bare.

"Do you go," said the parson, coldly, "to the kitchen."

"He'd better mind what he's about!" Aunt Esther complained.

Elizabeth was now on her elbow, staring in alarm. Her breast was significantly heaving, and the great vein of her throat had begun to beat. "Don't send she away, parson!" she pleaded. "She's wantin' her mother. Leave she be!"

The parson led Judith away.

"For God's sake, parson," Elizabeth gasped, "leave she come! What you goin' t' do with she?" She made as though to throw off the coverlet and follow; but she was unable, and fell back in exhaustion. "Judith!" she called. "Judith!"

The kitchen door was closed upon Judith; the obstacle had been removed.

"Don't hurt she, parson," Elizabeth entreated, seeming, now, to be possessed of a delusion concerning the parson's purpose. "She've done no harm, sir. She've been a good child all her life."

"Elizabeth," said the parson, firmly, "repent!"

"What you done with my Judith?"

"Repent!"

Elizabeth's heart began to work beyond its strength. "For God's sake, parson!" she gasped; "you'll not hurt she, will you?"

"Repent, I say!"

"I'll repent, parson. What you goin' t' do with Judy? Don't hurt she, parson. I'll repent. Oh, bring she back, parson! I'll repent. For God's sake, parson!" It may be that despair gave her cunning—I do not know. The deception was not beyond her: she had been converted twice—she was used to the forms as practised in those days at Twist Tickle. She wanted her child, poor woman! and her mind was clouded with fear: she is not to be called evil for the trick. Nor is Parson Lute to be blamed for following earnestly all that she said—praying, all the while, that the issue might be her salvation. She had a calculating eye on the face of Parson Lute. "I believe!" she cried, watching him closely for some sign of relenting. "Help thou my unbelief." The parson's face softened. "Save me!" she whispered, exhausted. "Save my soul! I repent. Save my soul!" She seemed now to summon all her strength, for the parson had not yet called back the child. "Praise God!" she screamed, seeking now be-

yond doubt to persuade him of her salvation. "I repent! I'm saved! I'm saved!"

"Praise God!" Parson Lute shouted.

Elizabeth swayed—threw up her hands—fell back dead.

"I tol' you so," said Aunt Esther, grimly.

XIV

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

FAITH, but 'twas a bitter night! Men were drowning on our coast—going to death in the wreck of schooners. The sea broke in unmasked assault upon the great rocks of Whisper Cove; the gale worried the cottage on the cliff. But 'twas warm in the kitchen: the women had kept the fire for the cup o' tea to follow the event; 'twas warm, and the lamp made light and shadow, and the kettle bubbled and puffed, the wood crackled, the fire snored and glowed, all serenely, in disregard of death, as though no mystery had come to appal the souls of us.

My uncle had Judith on his knee.

"I'm not able," she sobbed.

"An' ye'll not try?" he besought. "Ye'll not even try?"

We were alone: the women were employed in the other room; the parson paced the floor, unheeding, his yellow teeth fretting his finger-nails, his lean lips moving in some thankful communication with the God he served.

"Ah, but!" says my uncle, "ye'll *surely* come t' live along o' me!"

"No, no! I'll be livin' where I've always lived—with mother."

"Ye cannot live alone."

"Ay; but I'm able t' live alone—an' fish alone—like mother done."

"'Twas not her wish, child," says my uncle. "She'd have ye live along o' me. 'Why, Judy,' she'd have ye know, 'do ye live along o' he. Do ye trust, little maid,' she'd have ye t' know, 'that there ol' Nick Top. He've a powerful bad look t' the eye in his head,' she'd say, 'an' he've the name o' the devil; but Lord love ye!' she'd say, 'he've a heart with room t' contain ye, an' a warm welcome t' dwell within. He've took good care o' little ol' Dannie,' she'd say, 'an' he'll take good care o' *you*. He'll never see ye hurt or wronged or misguided so long as he lives. Not,' she'd say, 'that there damned ol' rascal!' An' if ye come, Judy, dear," my uncle entreated, "I won't see ye wronged—I won't!" My uncle's little eyes were overrunning now—the little eyes he would not look into. The parson still paced the floor, still unheeding, still muttering fervent prayer of some strange sort; but my uncle, aged in sinful ways, was frankly crying. "Ye'll come, Judy, will ye not?" he begged. "Along o' ol' Nick Top, who would not see ye wronged? Ah, little girl!" he implored—and then her head fell against him—"ye'll surely never doubt Nick Top. An' ye'll come t' he, an' ye'll sort o' look after un, will ye not?—that poor ol' feller!"

Judith was sobbing on his breast.

"That poor, poor ol' feller!"

She wept the more bitterly.

"Poor little girl!" he crooned, patting her shoulder. "Ah, the poor little girl!"

"I'll go!" cried Judith, in a passion of woe and gratitude. "I'll go—an' trust an' love an' care for you!"

My uncle clasped her close. "'*The Lard is my shepherd*,'" says he, looking up, God knows to what! his eyes streaming, "'*I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*'" By the wind, by the breaking of the troubled sea, the old man's voice was obscured. "'*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*'" Judith still sobbed, uncomforted; my uncle stroked her hair—and again she broke into passionate weeping. "'*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*'" Returned, again, in a lull of the gale, my fancy that I caught the lamentation of a multitude. "'*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*'"

"Bless God!" cried the parson. "Bless God, brother!"

"Ay," said my uncle, feelingly, "bless God!"

The parson wrung my uncle's hand.

"That there psa'm don't seem true, parson, b'y," says my uncle, "on a night like this here dirty night, with schooners in trouble at sea. Ever been t' sea in

a gale o' wind, parson? Ah, well! it don't seem true —not in a gale o' wind, with this here poor, lonely little maid's mother lyin' there dead in the nex' room. It jus' don't seem true!"

Parson Lute, poor man! started — stared, pained, anxious; in doubt, it may be, of the Christian congeniality of this man.

"It don't seem true," says my uncle, "in the face of a easterly gale an' the death o' mothers. An', look you, parson," he declared, "I'll be—well, parson, I'll jus' be *jiggered*—if it do! There you haves it!"

"Brother," the parson answered, accusingly, "it is in the Bible; it must be true."

"'Tis *where?*" my uncle demanded, confounded.

"In the Bible, sir."

"An' it—it—must be—"

"True, sir."

My uncle sighed; and—for I know his loving-kindness—'twas a sigh that spoke a pain at heart.

"It must be true," reiterated the wretched parson, now, it seemed, beset by doubt. "It *must* be true!"

"Why, by the dear God ye serve, parson!" roared my uncle, with healthy spirit, superior in faith, "I *knows* 'tis true, Bible or St. John's noospaper!"

Aunt Esther put her gray head in at the door. "Is the kettle b'ilin'?" says she.

The kettle was boiling.

"Ah!" says she—and disappeared.

"'*Though I walk*,'" the parson repeated, his thin,

freckled hands clasped, "'*through the valley of the shadow of death!*'"

There was no doctor at Twist Tickle: so the parson lay dead—poor man!—of the exposure of that night, within three days, in the house of Parson Stump. . . .

XV

A MEASURE OF PRECAUTION

WITH the threats of the gray stranger in mind, my uncle now began without delay to refit the *Shining Light:* this for all the world as though 'twere a timely and reasonable thing to do. But 'twas neither timely, for the fish were running beyond expectation off Twist Tickle, nor reasonable, for the *Shining Light* had been left to rot and foul in the water of Old Wives' Cove since my infancy. Whatever the pretence he made, the labor was planned and undertaken in anxious haste: there was, indeed, too much pretence — too suave an explanation, a hand too aimless and unsteady, an eye too blank, too large a flow of liquor—for a man who suffered no secret perturbation.

"In case o' accident, Dannie," he explained, as though 'twere a thing of no importance. "Jus' in case o' accident. I wouldn't be upsot," says he, "an I was you."

"Never you fear," says I.

"No," says he; "you'll stand by, Dannie!"

"That I will," I boasted.

"Ye can't delude *me*," says he. "I knows *you*. I bet ye *you'll* stand by, whatever comes of it."

'Tis quite beyond me to express my gratification. 'Twas a mysterious business altogether—this whim to make the *Shining Light* ready for sea. I could make nothing of it at all. And why, thinks I, should the old craft all at once be troubled by all this pother of block and tackle and hammer and saw? 'Twas beyond me to fathom; but I was glad to discover, whatever the puzzle, that my uncle's faith in the lad he had nourished was got real and large. 'Twas not for that he bred me; but 'twas the only reward—and that a mean, poor one—he might have. And he was now come near, it seemed, to dependence upon me; there was that in his voice to show it—a little trembling, a little hopelessness, a little wistfulness: a little weakening of its quality of wrathful courage.

"*You'll* stand by," he had said; and, ay, but it fair saddened me to feel the appeal of his aging spirit to my growing years! There comes a time, no doubt, in the relationship of old and young, when the guardian is all at once changed into the cherished one. 'Tis a tragical thing—a thing to be resolved, to be made merciful and benign, only by the acquiescence of the failing spirit. There is then no interruption—no ripple upon the flowing river of our lives. As for my uncle, I fancy that he kept watch upon me, in those days, to read his future, to discover his achievement, in my disposition. Stand by? Ay, that I would! And being young I sought a deed to do: I wished the accident might befall to prove me.

"Accident?" cries I. "Never you fear!"

"I'll not fear," says he, "that ye'll not stand by."

"Ay," I complained; "but never you fear at all!"

"I'll not fear," he repeated, with a little twinkle of amusement, "that ye'll not stand by, as best ye're able."

I felt now my strength—the greatness of my body and the soaring courage of my soul. This in the innocent way of a lad; and by grace of your recollection I shall not be blamed for it. Fourteen and something more? 'Twas a mighty age! What did it lack, thinks I, of power and wisdom? To be sure I strutted the present most haughtily and eyed the future with as saucy a flash as lads may give. The thing delighted my uncle; he would chuckle and clap me on the back and cry, "That's very good!" until I was wrought into a mood of defiance quite ridiculous. But still 'tis rather grateful to recall: for what's a lad's boasting but the honest courage of a man? I would serve my uncle; but 'twas not all: I would serve Judith. She was now come into our care: I would serve her.

"They won't nothin' hurt *she!*" thinks I.

I am glad to recall that this boyish love took a turn so chivalrous. . . .

When 'twas noised abroad that my uncle was to refit the *Shining Light*, Twist Tickle grew hilarious. "Laugh an you will, lads," says my uncle, then about the business of distributing genial invitations to the hauling-down. "'Tis a gift o' the good Lord t' be able t' do it. The ol' girl out there haven't a wonderful lot

to admire, an' she's nowhere near t' windward o' forty; but I'll show ye, afore I'm through, that she'll stand by in a dirty blow, an I jus' asks she t' try. Ye'll find, lads," says he, "when ye're so old as me, an' sailed t' foreign parts, that they's more to a old maid or a water-side widow than t' many a lass o' eighteen. The ol' girl out there haves a mean allowance o' beauty, but she've a character that isn't talked about after dark; an' when I buys her a pair o' shoes an' a new gown, why, ecod! lads, ye'll think she's a lady. 'Tis one way," says he, "that ladies is *made*."

This occurred at Eli Flack's stage of an evening when a mean, small catch was split and the men-folk were gathered for gossip. 'Twas after sunset, with fog drifting in on a lazy wind: a glow of red in the west. Our folk were waiting for the bait-skiff, which had long been gone for caplin, skippered, this time, by the fool of Twist Tickle.

"Whatever," says my uncle, "they'll be a darn o' rum for ye, saved and unsaved, when she've been hauled down an' scraped. An' will ye come t' the haulin'-down?"

That they would!

"I knowed ye would," says my uncle, as he stumped away, "saved an' unsaved."

The bait-skiff conch-horn sounded. The boat had entered the narrows. 'Twas coming slowly through the quiet evening—laden with bait for the fishing of to-morrow. Again the horn—echoing sweetly, faintly, among the hills of Twin Islands. 'Twas Moses Shoos

that blew; there was no mistaking the long-drawn blast.

Ah, well! she needed the grooming, this *Shining Light*, whatever the occasion. 'Twas scandalous to observe her decay in idleness. She needed the grooming—this neglected, listless, slatternly old maid of a craft. A craft of parts, to be sure, as I had been told; but a craft left to slow wreck, at anchor in quiet water. Year by year, since I could remember the days of my life, in summer and winter weather she had swung with the tides or rested silent in the arms of the ice. I had come to Twist Tickle aboard, as the tale of my infancy ran, on the wings of a nor'east gale of some pretensions; and she had with heroic courage weathered a dirty blow to land me upon the eternal rocks of Twin Islands. For this—though but an ancient story, told by old folk to engage my presence in the punts and stages of our harbor—I loved her, as a man, Newfoundland born and bred, may with propriety love a ship.

There are maids to be loved, no doubt, and 'tis very nice to love them, because they are maids, fashioned in a form most lovely by the good Lord, given a heart most childlike and true and loving and tenderly dependent, so that, in all the world, as I know, there is nothing so to be cherished with a man's last breath as a maid. I have loved a maid and speak with authority. But there is also a love of ships, though, being inland-born, you may not know it. 'Tis a surpassing faith and affection, inspired neither by beauty nor virtue, but wilful and

mysterious, like the love of a maid. 'Tis much the same, I'm thinking: forgiving to the uttermost, prejudiced beyond the perception of any fault, savagely loyal. 'Twas in this way, at any rate, that my uncle regarded the *Shining Light;* and 'twas in this way, too, with some gentler shades of admiration, proceeding from an apt imagination, that I held the old craft in esteem.

"Dannie," says my uncle, presently, as we walked homeward, "ye'll 'blige me, lad, by keepin' a eye on the mail-boat."

I wondered why.

"You keep a eye," he whispered, winking in a way most grave and troubled, "on that there little mail-boat when she lands her passengers."

"For what?" I asked.

"Brass buttons," says he.

'Twas now that the cat came out of the bag. Brass buttons? 'Twas the same as saying constables. This extraordinary undertaking was then a precaution against the accident of arrest. 'Twas inspired, no doubt, by the temper of that gray visitor with whom my uncle had dealt over the table in a fashion so surprising. I wondered again concerning that amazing broil, but to no purpose; 'twas beyond my wisdom and ingenuity to involve these opposite natures in a crime that might make each tolerable to the other and advantage them both. 'Twas plain, at any rate, that my uncle stood in jeopardy, and that of no trivial sort: else never would he have employed his scant savings upon the hull of the *Shining Light.* It grieved me to know it. 'Twas most

sad and most perplexing. 'Twas most aggravating, too: for I must put no questions, but accept, in cheerful serenity, the revelations he would indulge me with, and be content with that.

"An' if ye sees so much as a single brass button comin' ashore," says he, "ye'll give me a hail, will ye not, wherever I is?"

This I would do.

"Ye never can tell," he added, sadly, "what's in the wind."

"I'm never allowed t' know," said I.

He was quick to catch the complaint. "Ye're growin' up, Dannie," he observed; "isn't you, lad?"

I fancied I was already grown.

"Ah, well!" says he; "they'll come a time, lad, God help ye! when ye'll know."

"I wisht 'twould hasten," said I.

"I wisht 'twould never come at all," said he.

'Twas disquieting. . . .

Work on the *Shining Light* went forward apace and with right good effect. 'Twas not long—it might be a fortnight—before her hull was as sound as rotten plank could be made with gingerly calking. 'Twas indeed a delicate task to tap the timbers of her: my uncle must sometimes pause for anxious debate upon the wisdom of venturing a stout blow. But copper-painted below the water-line, adorned above, she made a brave showing at anchor, whatever she might do at sea; and there was nothing for it, as my uncle said, but to have faith,

which would do well enough: for faith, says he, could move mountains. When she had been gone over fore and aft, aloft and below, in my uncle's painstaking way —when she had been pumped and ballasted and cleared of litter and swabbed down and fitted with a new suit of sails—she so won upon our confidence that not one of us who dwelt on the neck of land by the Lost Soul would have feared to adventure anywhere aboard.

The fool of Twist Tickle pulled a long face.

"Hut, Moses!" I maintained; "she'll do very well. Jus' look at her!"

"Mother always 'lowed," says he, "that a craft was like a woman. An' since mother died, I've come t' learn for myself, Dannie," he drawled, "that the more a woman haves in the way o' looks the less weather she'll stand. I've jus' come, now," says he, "from overhaulin' a likely maid at Chain Tickle."

I looked up with interest.

"Jinny Lawless," says he. "Ol' Skipper Garge's youngest by the third."

My glance was still inquiring.

"Ay, Dannie," he sighed; "she've declined."

"You've took a look," I inquired, "at the maids o' Long Bill Hodge o' Sampson's Island?"

He nodded.

"An' they've—"

"*All* declined," says he.

"Never you care, Moses," said I. "Looks or no looks, you'll find the *Shining Light* stand by when *she* puts to sea."

"I'll not be aboard," says he.

"You're not so sure about that!" quoth I.

"I wouldn't ship," he drawled. "I'd never put t' sea on she: for mother," he added, "wouldn't like t' run the risk."

"You dwell too much upon your mother," said I.

"She's all I got in the way o' women," he answered. "All I got, Dannie—yet."

"But when you gets a wife—"

"Oh," he interrupted, "Mrs. Moses Shoos won't mind *mother!*"

"Still an' all," I gravely warned him, "'tis a foolish thing t' do."

"Well, Dannie," he drawled, in a way so plaintive that I found no answer to his argument, "I *is* a fool. I'm told so every day, by men an' maids, wherever I goes; an' I jus' can't help *bein'* foolish."

"God made you," said I.

"An' mother always 'lowed," said Moses, "that He knowed what He was up to. An', Dannie," says he, "she always 'lowed, anyhow, that *she* was satisfied."

'Twas of a Sunday evening—upon the verge of twilight: with the light of day still abroad, leaving the hills of Twin Islands clear-cut against the blue sky, but falling aslant, casting long shadows. Came, then, straggling from the graveyard in the valley by Thunder Head, the folk of our harbor. 'Twas all over, it seemed; they had buried old Tom Hossie. Moses and I sat together on the hill by Old Wives' Cove, in the calm of the day and weather: there was no wind stirring—no

drip of oar to be heard, no noise of hammer, no laughter of children, no cry or call of labor. They had buried old Tom Hossie, whom no peril of that coast, savagely continuing through seventy years, had overcome or daunted, but age had gently drawn away. I had watched them bear the coffin by winding paths along the Tickle shore and up the hill, stopping here to rest and there to rest, for the way was long; and now, sitting in the yellow sunshine of that kind day, with the fool of Twist Tickle for company, I watched them come again, their burden deposited in the inevitable arms. I wondered if the spirit of old Tom Hossie rejoiced in its escape. I wondered if it continued in pitiable age or had returned to youth—to strength for action and wish for love. I wondered, with the passionate curiosity of a lad, as I watched the procession of simple folk disperse, far off, to supper and to the kisses of children, if the spirit of old Tom Hossie had rather sail the seas he had sailed and love the maids of our land or dwell in the brightest glory painted for us by the prophets. I could, then, being a lad, conceive no happier world than that in which I moved, no joy aside from its people and sea and sunlight, no rest apart from the mortal love of Judith; but, now, grown older, I fancy that the spirit of old Tom Hossie, wise with age and vastly weary of the labor and troublous delights of life, hungered and thirsted for death.

The church bell broke upon this morbid meditation.

"Hark!" says Moses. "'Tis the first bell."

'Twas a melodious call to worship—throbbing sweetly

across the placid water of our harbor, beating on, liquidly vibrant, to rouse the resting hills of Twin Islands.

"You'll be off, Moses?"

"Ay," says he; "for mother always 'lowed 'twas good for a man t' go t' church, an' I couldn't do nothin', Dannie, that mother wouldn't like. I seem, lad, t' hear her callin', in that bell. 'Come—dear!' says she, 'Come —dear! Come—dear!' 'Tis like she used t' call me from the door. 'Come, dear,' says she; 'you'll never be hurt,' says she, 'when you're within with me.' So I 'low I'll go t' church, Dannie, where mother would have me be. 'You don't *need* t' leave the parson scare you, Moses,' says she; 'all you got t' do, dear,' says she, 'is t' remember that your mother loves you. You're so easy to scare, poor lad!' says she; 'but never forget *that*,' says she, 'an' you'll never be feared o' God. In fair weather,' says she, 'a man may need no Hand t' guide un; but in times o' trouble,' says she, 'he've jus' got t' have a God. I found that out,' says she, 'jus' afore you was born an' jus' after I knowed you was a fool. So I 'low, Moses,' says she, 'you'd best go t' church an' make friends with God, for then,' says she, 'you'll not feel mean t' call upon Him when the evil days comes. In times o' trouble,' says mother, 'a man jus' can't help singin' out for aid. An' 'tis a mean, poor man,' says she, 'that goes beggin' to a Stranger.' Hark t' the bell, Dannie! Does you not hear it? Does you not hear it call the folk t' come?"

'Twas still ringing its tender invitation.

"'Tis jus' like the voice o' mother," said the fool of

Twist Tickle. "Like when she used t' call me from the door. 'Come, dear!' says she. Hark, Dannie! Hear her voice? 'Come—dear! Come—dear! Come—dear!"'

God help me! but I heard no voice. . . .

Well, now, my uncle was in no genial humor while the work on the *Shining Light* was under way: for from our house, at twilight, when he paced the gravelled path, he could spy the punts come in from the grounds, gunwale laden, every one. 'Twas a poor lookout, said he, for a man with thirty quintal in his stage and the season passing; and he would, by lamplight, with many sighs and much impatient fuming, overhaul his accounts, as he said. 'Tis a mystery to me to this day how he managed it. I've no inkling of the system—nor capacity to guess it out. 'Twas all done with six round tin boxes and many sorts of shot; and he would drop a shot here and drop a shot there, and empty a box and fill one, and withdraw shot from the bags to drop in the boxes, and pick shot from the boxes to stow away in the bags, all being done in noisy exasperation, which would give way, presently, to despair, whereupon he would revive, drop shot with renewed vigor, counting aloud, the while, upon his seven fingers, until, in the end, he would come out of the engagement grimly triumphant. When, however, the *Shining Light* was ready for sea, with but an anchor to ship for flight, he cast his accounts for the last time, and returned to his accustomed composure and gentle manner with us all.

I lingered with him over his liquor that night; and I marked, when I moved his lamp near, that he was older than he had been.

"You're all wore out, sir," said I.

"No, Dannie," he answered; "but I'm troubled."

I put his glass within reach. For a long time he disregarded it: but sat disconsolate, staring vacantly at the floor, fallen into some hopeless muse. I turned away; and in a moment, when I looked again, I found his eyes bent upon me, as if in anxious appraisement of my quality.

"Ye *will* stand by," he cried, "will ye not?"

"I will!" I swore, in instant response.

"Whatever comes t' your knowledge?"

"Whatever comes!"

He held his glass aloft—laughed in delighted defiance—tossed off the liquor. "Ecod!" cries he, most heartily; "'tis you an' me, ol' shipmate, ag'in the world! Twelve year ago," says he, "since you an' me got under way on this here little cruise in the *Shining Light*. 'Twas you an' me then. 'Tis you an' me now. 'Twill be you an' me t' the end o' the v'y'ge. Here's t' fair winds or foul! Here's t' the ship an' the crew! Here's t' you an' here's t' me! Here's t' harbor for our souls!"

'Twas inspiring. I had never known the like to come from my uncle. 'Twas a thrilling toast. I wished I had a glass.

"For it may be, lad," says my uncle, "that we'll have t' put t' sea!"

But for many a month thereafter the *Shining Light*

lay at anchor where then she swung. No brass buttons came ashore from the mail-boat: no gray stranger intruded upon our peace. Life flowed quietly in new courses: in new courses, to be sure, with Judith and John Cather come into our house, but still serenely, as of old. The *Shining Light* rose and fell, day by day, with the tides of that summer, kept ready for our flight. In the end, she put to sea; but 'twas not in the way my uncle had foreseen. 'Twas not in flight; 'twas in pursuit. 'Twas a thing infinitely more anxious and momentous. 'Twas a thing that meant much more than life or death. In these distant days—from my chair, here, in our old house—by the window of my room—I look out upon the water of Old Wives' Cove, whence the *Shining Light* has for many years been missing; and I remember the time she slipped her anchor and ran to sea with the night coming down and a gale of wind blowing lustily up from the gray northeast.

XVI

GREEN PASTURES: AN INTERLUDE

IN all this time Judith dwelt with us by the Lost Soul. When my uncle fetched her from Whisper Cove, he gravely gave her into the care of our maid-servant, long ago widowed by the sea, who had gone childless all her life, and was now come to the desolate years, when she would sit alone and wistful at twilight, staring out into the empty world, where only hopelessly deepening shadows were, until 'twas long past time to light the lamp. In the child that was I she had found no ease or recompense, because of the mystery concerning me, which in its implication of wickedness revolted her, and because of my uncle's regulation of her demeanor in my presence, which tolerated no affectionate display; but when Judith came, orphaned and ill-nourished, the woman sat no longer in moods at evening, but busied herself in motherly service of the child, reawakened in the spirit. 'Twas thus to a watchful, willing guardianship, most tenderly maternal in solicitude and self-sacrifice, that Judith was brought by wise old Nick Top of Twist Tickle.

My uncle would have no misunderstanding.

"Uncle Nick," says I, "you'll be havin' a chair set for Judy in the cabin?"

"No, lad," he answered; "not for little Judy."

I expostulated most vigorously.

"Dannie, lad," said he, with a gravity that left me no stomach for argument, "the maid goes steerage along o' me. This here little matter o' Judy," he added, gently, "belongs t' me. I'm not makin' a lady o' she. She haves nothin' t' do—nothin' t' do, thank God!—with what's gone afore."

There was no word to say.

"An ye're wantin' t' have Judy t' dinner, by times," he continued, winking a genial understanding of my love-lorn condition, "I 'low it might be managed by a clever hand."

I asked him the way.

"Slug-shot," says he.

'Twas the merest hint.

"Remove," says he, darkly, "one slug-shot from the box with the star, an' drop it," says he, his left eye closed again, "in the box with the cross."

And there I had it!

You must know that by my uncle's severe direction I must never fail to appear at table in the evening save in the perfection of cleanliness as to face and hands and nails and teeth. "For what," says he, "have Skipper Chesterfield t' say on that p'int—underlined by Sir Harry? Volume II., page 24. A list o' the ornamental accomplishments. *'T' be extremely clean in your per-*

son.' There you haves it—underlined by Sir Harry!" He would examine me keenly, every nail and tooth of me, accepting neither excuse nor apology, and would never sit with me until I had passed inspection. In the beginning, 'twas my uncle's hand, laid upon me in virtuous chastisement, that persuaded me of the propriety of this genteel conduct; but presently, when I was grown used to the thing, 'twas fair impossible for me to approach the meat, in times of peace with place and weather, confronting no peril, hardship, laborious need, or discomfort, before this particular ornamental accomplishment had been indubitably achieved with satisfaction to my uncle and to myself.

My uncle had, moreover, righteously compelled, with precisely similar tactics as to the employment of his right hand, an attire in harmony with the cleanliness of my person. "For what," says he, "have bully ol' Skipper Chesterfield t' say on that there little p'int? What have that there fashionable ol' gentleman t' hold —underlined by Sir Harry? Volume II, page 24. 'A list o' the ornamental accomplishments (without which no man livin' can either please or rise in the world), which hitherto I fear ye wants,'" quotes he, most glibly, "'an' which only require your care an' attention t' possess.' Volume II., page 24. '*An' perfeckly well dressed, accordin' t' the fashion, be that what it will.*' There you haves it," says he, "an' underlined by Sir Harry hisself!" 'Twas a boresome thing, to be sure, as a lad of eleven, to come from boyish occupations to this maidenly concern for appearances: but now, when I

am grown older, 'tis a delight to escape the sweat and uniform of the day's work; and I am grateful to the broad hand that scorched my childish parts to teach me the value and pleasures of gentility.

At the same time, as you may believe, I was taught a manner of entering, in the way, by the hints of Sir Harry and the philosophy of the noble Lord Chesterfield, of a gentleman. It had to do with squared shoulders, the lift of the head, a strut, a proud and contemptuous glance. Many a night, as a child, when I fair fainted of vacancy and the steam and smell of salt pork was an agony hardly to be endured, I must prance in and out, to please my fastidious uncle, while he sat critical by the fire—in the unspeakable detachment of critics from the pressing needs (for example) of a man's stomach—and indulged his artistic perceptions to their completest satisfaction. He would watch me from his easy-chair by the fire as though 'twere the most delectable occupation the mind of man might devise: leaning forward in absorption, his ailing timber comfortably bestowed, his great head cocked, like a canary-bird's, his little eyes watchful and sparkling.

"Once again, Dannie," says he. "Head throwed higher, lad. An' ye might use yer chest a bit more."

Into the hall and back again.

"Fair," says he. "I'll not deny that ye're doin' better. But Sir Harry, lad," says he, concerned, with a rub at his weathered nose, "uses more chest. Head high, lad; shoulders back, chest out. Come now! An' a mite more chest."

This time at a large swagger.

"Very good," says he, in a qualified way. "But could ye not scowl t' more purpose?"

'Twas fair heroic to indulge him—with the room full of the smell of browned meat. But, says I, desperately, "I'll try, sir."

"Jus' you think, Dannie," says he, "that that there ol' rockin'-chair with the tidy is a belted knight o' the realm. Come now! Leave me see how ye'd deal with *he*. An' a mite more chest, Dannie, if ye're able."

A withering stare for the rocking-chair—superior to the point of impudence—and a blank look for the unfortunate assemblage of furniture.

"Good!" cries my uncle. "Ecod! but I never knowed Sir Harry t' do it better. That there belted rockin'-chair o' the realm, Dannie, would swear you was a lord! An' now, lad," says he, fondly smiling, "ye may feed."[1]

[1] This Sir Harry Allworthy, K.C.M.G., I must forthwith explain, was that distinguished colonial statesman whose retirement to the quiet and bizarre enjoyments of life was so sincerely deplored at the time. His taste for the picturesque characters of our coast was discriminating and insatiable. 'Twas no wonder, then, that he delighted in my uncle, whose familiar companion he was in St. John's. I never knew him, never clapped eyes on him, that I recall; he died abroad before I was grown presentable. 'Twas kind in him, I have always thought, to help my uncle in his task of transforming me, for 'twas done with no personal responsibility whatsoever in the matter, but solely of good feeling. I owed him but one grudge, and that a short-lived one, going back to the year when I was seven: 'twas by advice o' Sir Harry that I was made to tub myself, every morning, in

This watchful cultivation, continuing through years, had flowered in a pretty swagger, as you may well believe. In all my progress to this day I have not observed a more genteelly insolent carriage than that which memory gives to the lad that was I. I have now no regret: for when I am abroad, at times, for the health and pleasure of us all, 'tis a not ungrateful thing, not unamusing, to be reminded, by the deferential service and regard this ill-suited manner wins for the outport man that I am, of those days when my fond uncle taught me to scowl and strut and cry, "What the devil d'ye mean, sir!" to impress my quality upon the saucy world. But when Judith came into our care—when first she sat with us at table, crushed, as a blossom, by the Hand that seems unkind: shy, tender-spirited, alien to our ways—'twas with a tragical shock I realized the appearance of high station my uncle's misguided effort and affection had stamped me with.

She sat with my uncle in the steerage; and she was lovely, very gentle and lovely, I recall, sitting there, with exquisitely dropping grace, under the lamp—in the shower of soft, yellow light: by which her tawny hair was set aglow, and the shadows, lying below her great, blue eyes, were deepened, in sympathy with her appealing grief. Came, then, this Dannie Callaway, in his London clothes, arrived direct per S.S. *Cathian:* came this enamoured young fellow, with his educated stare, his legs (good and bad) long-trousered for the first time

the water of the season, be it crusted with ice or not, with my uncle listening at the door to hear the splash and gasp.

in his life, his fingers sparkling, his neck collared and his wrists unimpeachably cuffed, his chest "used" in such a way as never, God knows! had it swelled before. 'Twas with no desire to indulge his uncle that he had managed these adornments. Indeed not! 'Twas a wish, growing within his heart, to compass a winning and distinguished appearance in the presence of the maid he loved.

By this magnificence the maid was abashed.

"Hello!" says I, as I swaggered past the steerage.

There was no response.

"Is you happy, child," says I, catching the trick of the thing from my uncle, "along o' ol' Nick Top an' me an' John Cather?"

My tutor laughed.

"Eh, Judy?" says I.

The maid's glance was fallen in embarrassment upon her plate.

"Dannie," says my uncle, severely, "ye better get under way with your feedin'."

The which, being at once hungry and obedient, I did: but presently, looking up, caught the poor maid unself-conscious. She no longer grieved—no longer sat sad and listless in her place. She was peering greedily into the cabin, as my uncle was wont to do, her slim, white neck something stretched and twisted (it seemed) to round a spreading cluster of buttercups. 'Twas a moving thing to observe. 'Twas not a shocking thing; 'twas a thing melting to the heart—'twas a thing, befalling with a maid, at once to provide a lad

with chivalrous opportunity. The eyes were the great, blue eyes of Judith—grave, wide eyes, which, beneficently touching a lad, won reverent devotion, flushed the heart with zeal for righteousness. They were Judith's eyes, the same, as ever, in infinite depth of shadow, like the round sky at night, the same in light, like the stars that shine therein, the same in black-lashed mystery, like the firmament God made with His own hand. But still 'twas with a most marvellously gluttonous glance that she eyed the roast of fresh meat on the table before me. 'Twas no matter to *me*, to be sure! for a lad's love is not so easily alienated: 'tis an actual thing—not depending upon a neurotic idealization: therefore not to be disillusioned by these natural appearances.

"Judy," says I, most genially, "is you ever tasted roast veal?"

She was much abashed.

"Is you never," I repeated, "tasted roast veal?"

"No, sir," she whispered.

"'*Sir!*'" cries I, astounded. "'Sir!'" I gasped. "Maid," says I, now in wrathful amazement forgetting her afflicted state, "is you lost your senses?"

"N-n-no, sir," she stammered.

"For shame!" I scolded. "T' call me so!"

"Daniel," my uncle interjected, "volume II., page 24. '*A distinguished politeness o' manners.*'"

By this my tutor was vastly amused, and delightedly watched us, his twinkling glance leaping from face to face.

"I'll not have it, Judy!" I warned her. "You'll vex me sore an you does it again."

The maid would not look up.

"Volume II., page 25," my uncle chided. "Underlined by Sir Harry. '*An' this address an' manner should be exceedin'ly respeckful.*'"

"Judy!" I implored.

She ignored me.

"An you calls me that again, maid," I threatened, in a rage, "you'll be sorry for it. I'll—"

"Holy Scripture!" roared my uncle, reaching for his staff. "'*Spare the rod and spoil the child.*'"

I was not to be stopped by this. 'Twas an occasion too promising in disaster. She had sirred me like a house-maid. Sir? 'Twas past believing. That Judith should be so overcome by fine feathers and a roosterly strut! 'Twas shocking to discover the effect of my uncle's teaching. It seemed to me that the maid must at once be dissuaded from this attitude of inferiority or my solid hope would change into a dream. Inferiority? She must have no such fancy! Fixed within her mind 'twould inevitably involve us in some catastrophe of feeling. The torrent of my wrath and supplication went tumbling on: there was no staying it. My uncle's hand fell short of his staff; he sat stiff and agape with astonished admiration: perceiving which, my tutor laughed until my hot words were fair extinguished in the noise he made. By this my uncle was set laughing: whence the infection spread to me. And then Judith peeped at me through the

cluster of buttercups with the ghost of a roguish twinkle.

"I'll call you Dannie," says she, slyly—"t' save you the lickin'!"

"Daniel," cries my uncle, delighted, "one slug-shot. Box with the star t' the box with the cross. Judy," says he, "move aft alongside o' that there roast veal!"

'Twas the beginning and end of this seeming difference of station. . . .

John Cather took us in hand to profit us. 'Twas in the learning he had—'twas in every genteel accomplishment he had himself mastered in the wise world he came from—that we were instructed. I would have Judy for school-fellow: nor would I be denied—not I! 'Twas the plan I made when first I knew John Cather's business in our house: else, thinks I, 'twould be a mean, poor match we should make of it in the end. I would have her: and there, says I, with a toss and a stamp, to my uncle's delight, was an end of it! It came about in this way that we three spent the days together in agreeable employment: three young, unknowing souls—two lads and a maid. In civil weather, 'twas in the sunlight and breeze of the hills, 'twas in shady hollows, 'twas on the warm, dry rocks, which the breakers could not reach, 'twas on the brink of the cliff, that Cather taught us, leaving off to play, by my uncle's command, when we were tired of study; and when the wind blew with rain, or fog got the world all a-drip, or the task was incongruous with sunshine and fresh air (like multipli-

cation), 'twas within doors that the lesson proceeded—in my library, which my uncle had luxuriously outfitted for me, when still I was an infant, against this very time.

"John Cather," says I, one day, "you've a wonderful tongue in your head."

'Twas on the cliff of Tom Tulk's Head. We had climbed the last slope hand in hand, with Judith between, and were now stretched out on the brink, resting in the cool blue wind from the sea.

"A nimble tongue, Dannie," he replied, "I'll admit."

"A wonderful tongue!" I repeated. "John Cather," I exclaimed, in envious admiration, "you've managed t' tell Judy in ten thousand ways that she's pretty."

Judith blushed.

"I wisht," says I, "that *I* was so clever as that."

"I know still another way," said he.

"Ay; an' a hundred more!"

"Another," said he, softly, turning to Judith, who would not look at him. "Shall I tell you, Judith?"

She shook her head.

"No?" said he. "Why not?"

The answer was in a whisper—given while the maid's hot face was still turned away. "I'm not wantin' you to," she said.

"Do, maid!" I besought her.

"I'm not wantin' him to."

"'Tis your eyes, I'll be bound!" said I. "'Twill be so clever that you'll be glad to hear."

"But I'm not *wantin'* him to," she persisted.

My tutor smiled indulgently—but with a pitiful little trace of hurt remaining. 'Twas as though he must suffer the rebuff with no offended question. In the maid 'twas surely a wilful and bewildering thing to deny him. I could not make it out: but wished, in the breeze and sunlight of that day, that the wound had not been dealt. 'Twas an unkind thing in Judith, thinks I; 'twas a thing most cruel—thus to coquette with the friendship of John Cather.

"Ah, Judy," I pleaded, "leave un have his way!"

She picked at the moss.

"Will ye not, maid?"

"I'm afraid!" she whispered in my ear.

"An' you'd stop for that!" I chided, not knowing what she meant: as how should a lad?

It seemed she would.

"'Tis an unkind thing," says I, "t' treat John Cather so. He've been good," says I, "t' *you*, Judy."

"Dannie!" she wailed.

"Don't, Dannie!" Cather entreated.

"I'd have ye listen, Judy," said I, in earnest, kind reproach, "t' what John Cather says. I'd have ye heed his words. I'd have ye care for him." Being then a lad, unsophisticated in the wayward, mercilessly selfish passion of love, ignorant of the unmitigated savagery of the thing, I said more than that, in my folly. "I'd have ye love John Cather," says I, "as ye love me." 'Tis a curious thing to look back upon. That I should snarl the threads of our destinies! 'Tis an innocency hard to credit. But yet John Cather and I had no sensitive

intuition to warn us. How should we—being men? 'Twas for Judith to perceive the inevitable catastrophe; 'twas for the maid, not misled by reason, schooled by feeling into the very perfection of wisdom, to control and direct the smouldering passion of John Cather and me in the way she would, according to the power God gives, in infinite understanding of the hearts of men, to a maid to wield. "I'd have ye love John Cather," says I, "as ye love me." It may be that a lad loves his friend more than any other. "I'd have ye t' know, Judy," says I, gently, "that John Cather's my friend. I'd have ye t' know—"

"Dannie," Cather interrupted, putting an affectionate hand on my shoulder, "you don't know what you're saying."

Judith turned.

"I do, John Cather," says I. "I knows full well."

Judith's eyes, grown all at once wide and grave, looked with wonder into mine. I was made uneasy—and cocked my head, in bewilderment and alarm. 'Twas a glance that searched me deep. What was this? And why the warning? There was more than warning. 'Twas pain I found in Judith's great, blue eyes. What had grieved her? 'Twas reproach, too—and a flash of doubt. I could not read the riddle of it. Indeed, my heart began to beat in sheer fright, for the reproach and doubt vanished, even as I stared, and I confronted a sparkling anger. But presently, as often happened with that maid, tears flushed her eyes, and the long-lashed lids fell, like a curtain, upon her grief: where-

upon she turned away, troubled, to peer at the sea, breaking far below, and would not look at me again. We watched her, John Cather and I, for an anxious space, while she sat brooding disconsolate at the edge of the cliff, a sweep of cloudless sky beyond. The slender, sweetly childish figure—with the tawny hair, I recall, all aglow with sunlight—filled the little world of our thought and vision. There was a patch of moss and rock, the green and gray of our land—there was Judith—there was an infinitude of blue space. John Cather's glance was frankly warm; 'twas a glance proceeding from clear, brave, guileless eyes—springing from a limpid soul within. It caressed the maid, in a fashion, thinks I, most brotherly. My heart warmed to the man; and I wondered that Judith should be unkind to him who was our friend.

'Twas a mystery.

"You will not listen, Judith?" he asked. "'Tis a very pretty thing I want to say."

Judith shook her head.

A flash of amusement crossed his face. "Please do!" he coaxed.

"No!"

"I'm quite proud of it," says he, with a laugh in his fine eyes. He leaned forward a little, and made as if to touch her, but withdrew his hand. "I did not know," says he, "that I was so clever. I have it all ready. I have every word in place. I'd like to say it—for my own pleasure, if not for yours. I think it would be a pity to let the pretty words waste themselves unsaid. I—I—

hope you'll listen. I—I—really hope you will. And you will not?"

"No!" she cried, sharply. "No, no!"

"Why not?"

"No!" she repeated; and she slipped her hand into mine, and hid them both snugly in the folds of her gown, where John Cather could not see. "God wouldn't like it, John Cather," says she, her little teeth all bare, her eyes aflash with indignation, her long fingers so closely entwined with mine that I wondered. "He wouldn't *'low* it," says she, "an He knowed."

I looked at John Cather in vague alarm.

XVII

RUM AND RUIN

IN these days at Twist Tickle, his perturbation passed, my uncle was most blithe: for the *Shining Light* was made all ready for sea, with but an anchor to slip, sails to raise, for flight from an army of St. John's constables; and we were a pleasant company, well fallen in together, in a world of fall weather. And, says he, if the conduct of a damned little Chesterfieldian young gentleman was a labor t' manage, actin' accordin' t' that there fashionable ol' lord of the realm, by advice o' Sir Harry, whatever the lad in the case, whether good or bad, why, then, a maid o' the place, ecod! was but a pastime t' rear, an' there, says he, you had it! 'Twas at night, when he was come in from the sea, and the catch was split, and we sat with him over his rum, that he beamed most widely. He would come cheerily stumping from his mean quarters above, clad in the best of his water-side slops, all ironed and brushed, his great face glossy from soap and water, his hair dripping; and he would fall into the arms of his great-chair by the fire with a genial grunt of satisfaction, turning presently to regard

us, John Cather and Judy and me, with a grin so wide and sparkling and benevolently indulgent and affectionate—with an aspect so patriarchal—that our hearts would glow and our faces responsively shine.

"Up with un, Dannie!" says he.

I would lift the ailing bit of timber to the stool with gingerly caution.

"Easy, lad!" groans he. "Ouch! All ship-shape," says he. "Is you got the little brown jug o' water?"

'Twould surely be there.

"Green pastures!" says he, so radiantly red, from his bristling gray stubble of hair to the folds of his chin, that I was reminded of a glowing coal. "There you haves it, Dannie!" cries he. "I knowed they was some truth in that there psa'm. Green pastures! '*He maketh me t' lie down in green pastures.*' Them ol' bullies was wise as owls. . . . Pass the bottle, Judy. Thank 'e, maid. Ye're a wonderful maid t' blush, thank God! for they's nothin' so pretty as that. I'm a old, old man, Judy; but t' this day, maid, 'tis fair painful t' keep from kissin' red cheeks, whenever I sees un. Judy," says he, with a wag, his hand on the bottle, "I'd rather be tempted by mermaids or angels —I cares not which — than by a mortal maid's red cheeks! 'Twould be wonderful easy," says he, "t' resist a angel. . . . Green pastures! Eh, Dannie, b'y? Times is changed, isn't they? Not like it used t' be, when you an' me sot here alone t' drink, an' you was on'y a wee little lad. I wisht ye was a wee little lad again, Dannie; but Lord love us!" cries he, indignant

with the paradox, "when ye *was* a wee little lad I wisht ye was growed. An' there you haves it!" says he, dolefully. "There you haves it! . . . I 'low, Dannie," says he, anxiously, his bottle halted in mid-air, "that *you'd* best pour it out. I'm a sight too happy, the night," says he, "t' be trusted with a bottle."

'Tis like he would have gone sober to bed had I not been there to measure his allowance.

"Ye're not so wonderful free with the liquor," he pouted, "as ye used t' be."

'Twas Judy who had put me up to it.

"Ye might be a *drop* more free!" my uncle accused.

'Twas reproachful—and hurt me sore. That I should deny my uncle who had never denied me! I blamed the woman. 'Tis marvellous how this frailty persists. That Judith, Twist Tickle born, should deliberately introduce the antagonism—should cause my uncle to suffer, me to regret! 'Twas hard to forgive the maid her indiscretion. I was hurt: for, being a lad, not a maid of subtle perceptions, I would not have my uncle go lacking that which comforted his distress and melancholy. Faith! but I had myself been looking forward with a thirsty gullet to the day—drawn near, as I thought—when I should like a man drink hard liquor with him in the glow of our fire: as, indeed, had he, by frank confession, indiscreetly made when he was grown horrified or wroth with my intemperance with ginger-ale.

"God save ye, Dannie!" he would expostulate, most

heartily, most piously; "but I *wisht* ye'd overcome the bilge-water habit."

I would ignore him.

"'Tis on'y a matter o' *will*," says he. "'Tis nothin' more than that. An' I'm fair ashamed," he groaned, in sincere emotion, "to think ye're shackled, hand an' foot, to a bottle o' ginger-ale. For shame, lad—t' come t' such a pass." He was honest in his expostulation; 'twas no laughing matter—'twas an anxiously grave concern for my welfare. He disapproved of the beverage—having never tasted it. "*You*," cries he, with a pout and puff of scorn, "an' your bilge-water! In irons with a bottle o' ginger-ale! Could ye but see yourself, Dannie, ye'd quit quick enough. 'Tis a ridiculous picture ye make—you an' your bottle. 'Twould not be hard t' give it up, lad," he would plead. "Ye'll manage it, Dannie, an ye'd but put your mind to it. Ye'd be nervous, I've no doubt, for a spell. But what's that? Eh, what's that—ag'in your health?"

I would sip my ginger-ale unheeding.

"An' what about Chesterfield?" says he.

"I'll have another bottle, sir," says I.

"Lord love us!" he would complain, in such distress that I wish I had not troubled him with this passion. "Ye're fair bound t' ruin your constitution with drink."

Pop went the cork.

"An' here's *me*," says he, in disgusted chagrin, "tryin' t' make a gentleman out o' ye!"

Ah, well! 'twas now a mean, poor lookout for the

cosey conviviality I had all my life promised myself with my uncle. Since the years when late o' nights I occupied the arms and broad knee of Cap'n Jack Large at the Anchor and Chain—with a steaming comfort within and a rainy wind blowing outside—my uncle and I had dwelt upon the time when I might drink hard liquor with him like a man. 'Twould be grand, says my uncle, to sit o' cold nights, when I was got big, with a bottle o' Long Tom between. A man grown—a man grown able for his bottle! For him, I fancy, 'twas a vision of successful achievement and the reward of it. Lord love us! says he, but the talk o' them times would be lovely. The very thought of it, says he—the thought o' Dannie Callaway grown big and manly and helpfully companionable—fair warmed him with delight. But now, at Twist Tickle, with the strong, sly hands of Judith upon our ways, with her grave eyes watching, now commending, now reproaching, 'twas a new future that confronted us. Ay, but that maid, dwelling responsibly with us men, touched us closely with control! 'Twas a sharp eye here, a sly eye there, a word, a twitch of her red lips, a lift of the brow and dark lashes—and a new ordering of our lives. 'Tis marvellous how she did it: but that she managed us into better habits, by the magic mysteriously natural to a maid, I have neither the wish nor the will to gainsay. I grieved that she should deprive my uncle of his comfort; but being a lad, devoted, I would not add one drop to my uncle's glass, while Judith sat under the lamp, red-cheeked in the heat of the fire, her great eyes wishful to approve,

her mind most captivatingly engaged, as I knew, with the will of God, which was her own, dear heart! though she did not know it.

"Dannie," says she, in private, "God wouldn't 'low un more'n a quarter of a inch at a time."

'Twas in the pantry while I got the bottle.

"An' how," quoth I, "is you knowin' that?"

"Why, child," she answered, "God tol' me so."

I writhed. 'Twas a fancy so strange the maid had: but was yet so true and reverent and usefully efficient—so high in leading to her who led us with her into pure paths—that I must smile and adore her for it. 'Twas to no purpose, as I knew, to thresh over the improbability of the communication: Judith's eyes were round and clear and unwavering—full of most exalted truth, concern, and confidence. There was no pretence anywhere to be descried in their depths: nor evil nor subterfuge of any sort. And it seems to me, now, grown as I am to sager years, that had the Guide whose hand she held upon the rough road of her life communed with His sweet companion, 'twould have been no word of reproach or direction he would whisper for her, who needed none, possessing all the wisdom of virtue, dear heart! but a warning in my uncle's behalf, as she would have it, against the bottle he served. The maid's whimsical fancy is not incomprehensible to me, neither tainted with irreverence nor untruth: 'twas a thing flowering in the eyrie garden of her days at Whisper Cove—a thing, as I cannot doubt, of highest inspiration.

"But," I protested, glibly, looking away, most wish-

ful, indeed, to save my uncle pain, "I isn't able t' measure a quarter of a inch."

"*I* could," says she.

"Not with the naked eye, maid!"

"Well," says she, "you might try, jus' t' please God."

To be sure I might: I might pour at a guess. But, unhappily (and it may be that there is some philosophy in this for a self-indulgent world), I was not in awe of Judith's fantastic conception of divinity, whatever I thought of my own, by whom, however, I was not conjured. Moreover, I loved my uncle, who had continued to make me happy all my life, and would venture far in the service of his comfort. The twinkling, benevolent aspect of the maid's Deity could not compel a lad to righteousness: I could with perfect complacency conduct myself perversely before it. And must we then, lads and men, worship a God of wrath, quick to punish, niggardly in fatherly forgiveness, lest we stray into evil ways? I do not know. 'Tis beyond me to guess the change to be worked in the world by a new conception of the eternal attributes.

"An' will you not?" says she.

It chanced, now, that she held the lamp near her face, so that her beauty was illumined and transfigured. 'Twas a beauty most tender—most pure and elfin and religious. 'Tis a mean, poor justification, I know, to say that I was in some mysterious way—by the magic resident in the beauty of a maid, and virulently, wickedly active within its sphere, which is the space the vision of a lad may carry—that I was by this magic in-

capacitated and overcome. 'Tis an excuse made by fallen lads since treason was writ of; 'tis a mere excuse, ennobling no traitorious act: since love, to be sure, has no precedence of loyalty in hearts of truth and manful aspiration. Love? surely it walks with glorious modesty in the train of honor—or is a brazen baggage. But, as it unhappily chanced, whatever the academic conception, the maid held the lamp too close for my salvation: so close that her blue, shadowy eyes bewildered me, and her lips, red and moist, with a gleam of white teeth between, I recall, tempted me quite beyond the endurance of self-respect. I slipped, indeed, most sadly in the path, and came a shamefaced, ridiculous cropper.

"An' will you not," says she, "pour but a quarter of a inch t' the glass?"

"I will," I swore, "for a kiss!"

'Twas an outrageous betrayal of my uncle.

"For shame!" cries she.

"I will for a kiss," I repeated, my soul offered on a platter to the devil, "regardless o' the consequences."

She matched my long words with a great one caught from my tutor. "God isn't inclined," says she, with a toss, "in favor o' kisses."

And there you had it!

When we sat late, our maid-servant would indignantly whisk Judith off to bed—crying out upon us for our wickedness.

"Cather," my uncle would drawl, Judith being gone, "ye're all wore out along o' too much study."

"Not at all, Skipper Nicholas!" cries my tutor.

"Study," says my uncle, in solemn commiseration, "is a bitter thing t' be cotched by. Ye're all wore out, parson, along o' the day's work."

My tutor laughed.

"Too much study for the brain," says my uncle, sympathetically, his eye on the bottle. "I 'low, parson, if I was you I'd turn in."

Cather was unfailingly obedient.

"Dannie," says my uncle, with reviving interest, "have he gone above?"

"He have," says I.

"Take a look," he whispered, "t' see that Judy's stowed away beyond hearin'."

I would step into the hall—where was no night-gowned figure listening on the stair—to reassure him.

"Dannie," says he, wickedly gleeful, "how's the bottle?"

I would hold it up to the lamp and rattle its contents. "'Tis still stout, sir," says I. "'Tis a wonderful bottle."

"Stout!" cries he, delighted. "Very good."

"Still stout," says I; "an' the third night!"

"Then," says he, pushing his glass towards me, "I 'low they's no real need o' puttin' me on short allowance. Be liberal, Dannie, b'y—be liberal when ye pours."

I would be liberal.

"'Tis somehow sort o' comfortable, lad," says he, eying me with honest feeling, "t' be sittin' down here with a ol' chum like you. 'Tis very good, indeed."

I was glad that he thought so.

And now I must tell that I loved Judith. 'Tis enough to say so—to write the bare words down. I'm not wanting to, to be sure: for it shames a man to speak boldly of sacred things like this. It shames a lad, it shames a maid, to expose the heart of either, save sacredly to each other. 'Tis all well enough, and most delightful, when the path is moonlit and secluded, when the warmth and thrill of a slender hand may be felt, when the stars wink tender encouragement from the depths of God's own firmament, when all the world is hushed to make the opportunity: 'tis then all well enough to speak of love. There is nothing, I know, to compare in ecstasy with the whisper and sigh and clinging touch of that time—to compare with the awe and mystery and solemnity of it. But 'tis sacrilegious and most desperately difficult and embarrassing, I find, at this distant day, to write of it. I had thought much upon love, at that wise age—fifteen, it was, I fancy—and it seemed to me, I recall, a thing to cherish within the heart of a man, to hide as a treasure, to dwell upon, alone, in moments of purest exaltation. 'Twas not a thing to bandy about where punts lay tossing in the lap of the sea; 'twas not a thing to tell the green, secretive old hills of Twin Islands; 'twas not a thing to which the doors of the workaday world might be opened, lest the ribaldry to which it come offend and wound it: 'twas a thing to conceal, far and deep, from the common gaze and comment, from the vulgar chances, the laugh and cynical exhaustion and bleared wit of the life we live. I loved Judith—her eyes and tawny hair and slender

finger-tips, her whimsical way, her religious, loving soul. I loved her; and I would not have you think 'twas any failure of adoration to pour my uncle an honest dram of rum when she was stowed away in innocency of all the evil under the moon. 'Tis a thing that maids have nothing to do with, thinks I; 'tis a knowledge, indeed, that would defile them. . . .

"Dannie," says my uncle, once, when we were left alone, "he've begun t' fall."

I was mystified.

"The parson," he explained, in a radiant whisper; "he've begun t' yield."

"T' what?" I demanded.

"Temptation. He've a dark eye, lad, as I 'lowed long ago, an' he've begun t' give way t' argument."

"God's sake, Uncle Nick!" I cried, "leave the poor man be. He've done no harm."

He scratched his stubble of hair, and contemplatively traced a crimson scar with his forefinger. "No," he mused, his puckered, weathered brow in a doubtful frown; "not so far. But," he added, looking cheerily up, "I've hopes that I'll manage un yet."

"Leave un alone," I pleaded.

"Ay," says he, with a hitch of his wooden leg; "but I *needs* un."

I protested.

"Ye don't s'pose, Dannie," he complained, in a righteous flash, "that I'm able t' live forever, does ye?"

I did not, but heartily wished he might; and by this sincere expression he was immediately mollified.

"Well," says he, his left eyelid drooping in a knowing way, his whole round person, from his topmost bristle to his gouty wooden toe, braced to receive the shock of my congratulation, "I've gone an' worked that there black-an'-white young parson along! Sir Harry hisself," he declared, "couldn't have done it no better. Nor ol' Skipper Chesterfield, neither," says he.

'Twas a pity.

"No," he boasted, defiantly; "nor none o' them wise ol' bullies of old!"

I sighed.

"Dannie," says he, with the air of imparting a grateful secret, "I got that there black-an'-white young parson corrupted. I got un," he repeated, leaning forward, his fantastic countenance alight with pride and satisfaction—"I got un corrupted! I've got un t' say," says he, "that 'tis sometimes wise t' do evil that good may come. An' when a young feller says that," says he, with a grave, grave nodding, so that his disfigurements were all most curiously elongated, "he've sold his poor, mean soul t' the devil."

"I wisht," I complained, "that you'd leave the poor man alone."

"Why, Dannie," says my uncle, simply, "he's paid for!"

"Paid for!" cries I.

"Ay, lad," he chided; "t' be sure, that there young black-an'-white parson is paid for."

I wondered how that might be.

"Paid for!" my uncle repeated, in a quivering, indrawn breath, the man having fallen, all at once, into gloom and terror. "'Tis all paid for!"

Here again was the disquieting puzzle of my childish years: my uncle, having now leaned forward to come close to me, was in a spasmodic way indicating the bowels of the earth with a turned thumb. Down, down: it seemed he pointed to infinite depths of space and woe. Down, down—continuing thus, with a slow, grevious wagging of the great, gray head the sea had in the brutal passion of some wild night maltreated. The familiar things of the room, the simple, companionable furniture of that known place, with the geometrically tempestuous ocean framed beyond, were resolved into a background of mysterious shadows as I stared; there was nothing left within the circle of my vision but a scared gargoyle, leaning into the red glow of the fire. My uncle's round little eyes protruded — started from the bristles and purpling scars and brown flesh of his broad face—as many a time before I had in sad bewilderment watched them do. Paid for—all the pride and comfort and strange advantages of my life! All paid for in the black heart of this mystery! And John Cather, too! I wondered again, with an eye upon my uncle's significantly active thumb, having no courage to meet his poignant glance, how that might be. According to my catechism, severely taught in other years, I must ask no questions, but must courteously await enlightenment at my uncle's pleasure; and 'twas most marvellously hard

—this night of all the nights—to keep my soul unspotted from the sin of inquisitiveness.

"Paid for," my uncle repeated, hoarse with awe, "by poor Tom Callaway!"

'Twas kind in my father, thinks I, to provide thus bounteously for my welfare.

"Poor Tom!" my uncle sighed, now recovering his composure. "Poor, poor ol' Tom—in the place he's to!"

"Still an' all, Uncle Nick," I blundered, "I wisht you'd leave my tutor be."

"Ye're but a child!" he snapped. "Put the stopper in the bottle. 'Tis time you was in bed."

'Twas an unexpected rebuke. I was made angry with him, for the only time in all my life; and to revenge myself I held the bottle to the lamp, and deliberately measured its contents, before his astonished eyes, so that, though I left it with him, he could not drink another drop without my knowing it; and I stoppered the bottle, as tight as I was able, and left him to get his wooden toe from the stool with the least agony he could manage, and would not bank the fire or light his night-lamp. I loved my tutor, and would not have him corrupted; 'twas a hateful thought to conceive that he might come unwittingly to ruin at our hands. 'Twas a shame in my old uncle, thinks I, to fetch him to despair. John Cather's soul bargained for and bought! 'Twas indeed a shame to say it. There was no evil in him when he came clear-eyed from the great world beyond us; there should be no evil in him when he left us,

whenever that might be, to renew the life he would not tell us of. I looked my uncle in the eye in a way that hurt and puzzled him. I wish I had not; but I did, as I pounded the cork home, and boldly slipped the screw into my pocket. He would go on short allowance, that night, thinks I: for his nails, broken by toil, would never pick the stopper out. And I prepared, in a rage, to fling out of the room, when—

"Dannie!" he called.

I halted.

"What's this?" says he, gently. "It never happened afore, little shipmate, betwixt you an' me. What's this?" he begged. "I'm troubled."

I pulled the cork of his bottle, and poured a dram, most liberally, to delight his heart; and I must turn my face away, somehow, to hide it from him, because of shame for this mean doubt of him, ungenerous and ill-begotten.

"I'm troubled," he repeated. "What's this, lad?"

I could not answer him.

"Is I been unkind, Dannie?"

"No," I sobbed. "'Tis that I've been wicked t' *you!*"

He looked at me with eyes grown very grave. "Ah!" says he, presently, comprehending. "That's good," says he, in his slow, gentle way. "That's very good. But ye'll fret no more, will ye, Dannie? An' ye've growed too old t' cry. Go t' bed, lad. Ye're all wore out. I'll manage the lamp alone. God bless ye. Go t' bed."

I waited.

"That's good," he repeated, in a muse, staring deep into the red coals in the grate. "That's very good."

I ran away—closed my door upon this wretched behavior, but could not shut its ghastly sauciness and treachery from the chambers of my memory. The habit of faith and affection was strong: I was no longer concerned for my friend John Cather, but was mightily ashamed of this failure in duty to the grotesque old hook-and-line man who had without reserve of sacrifice or strength nourished me to the lusty years of that night. As I lay in bed, I recall, downcast, self-accusing, flushed with shame, I watched the low clouds scud across the starlit sky, and I perceived, while the torn, wind-harried masses rushed restlessly on below the high, quiet firmament, that I had fallen far away from the serenity my uncle would teach me to preserve in every fortune.

"I'll not fail again!" thinks I. "Not I!"

'Twas an experience profitable or unprofitable, as you shall presently judge.

XVIII

A LEGACY OF LOVE

MOSES SHOOS, I recall, carried the mail that winter. 'Twas a thankless task: a matter of thirty miles to Jimmie Tick's Cove and thirty back again. Miles hard with peril and brutal effort—a way of sleet and slush, of toilsome paths, of a swirling mist of snow, of stinging, perverse winds or frosty calm, of lowering days and the haunted dark o' night—to be accomplished, once a week, afoot and alone, by way of barren and wilderness and treacherous ice. 'Twas a thankless task, indeed; but 'twas a task to which the fool of Twist Tickle addressed himself with peculiar reverence.

"Mother," says he, "always 'lowed that a man ought t' serve his Queen: an' mother knowed. 'Moses,' says she, afore she died, 'a good man haves just *got* t' serve the Queen: for an good men don't,' says she, 'the poor Lady is bound t' come t' grief along o' rascals. Poor, *poor* Lady!' says she. 'She've a wonderful lot t' put up with along o' stupid folk an' rascals. I'm not knowin' how she bears it an' lives. 'Tis a mean, poor dunderhead, with heart an' brains in his gullet,' says she, 'that wouldn't serve the Queen. God save the Queen!' says

mother. 'What's a man worth,' says she, 'that on'y serves hisself?'"

Not much, thinks I!

"An' mother knowed," says Moses, softly. "Ay, Dannie," he declared, with a proud little grin, "I bet you *mother* knowed!"

'Twas this exalted ideal of public service, fashioned in the wisdom of the simple by the amazing mother who bore him, that led the fool, as by the hand, from a wilderness of snow and night and bewildered visions, wherein no aspiration of his own shaped itself, to the warm hearth of Twist Tickle and the sleep of a child by night.

Once I watched him stagger, white and bent with weather and labor, from the ice of Ship's Run, his bag on his back, to the smoking roofs of Twist Tickle, which winter had spread with a snowy blanket and tucked in with anxious hands. 'Twas a bitter day, cold, windy, aswirl with the dust of snow, blinding as a mist. I sat with Judith in the wide, deeply cushioned window-seat of my lib'ry, as my uncle called the comfortable, book-shelved room he had, by advice o' Sir Harry, provided for my youth. John Cather was not about; and I caressed, I recall, the long, slender fingers of her hand, which unfailingly and without hesitation gave themselves to my touch. She would never deny me that, this maid; 'twas only kisses she would hold me from. She would snuggle close and warmly, when John Cather was not about, but would call her God to witness that

kisses were prohibited where happiness would continue.

"'Tis not *'lowed*, child," says she.

Her cheek was so close, so round and soft and delicately tinted, that I touched my lips to it, quite unable to resist.

"I don't mind *that*," says she.

'Twas vastly encouraging.

"'Twas so brotherly," she added.

"Judy," I implored, "I'm in need of another o' that same kind."

"No, no!" she cried. "You'd never find the spot!"

'Twas with the maid, then, I sat in the window-seat of my warm room, content with the finger-tips I might touch and kiss as I would, lifted into a mood most holy and aspiring by the weight of her small head upon my shoulder, the bewildering light and mystery of her great, blue eyes, the touch and sweet excitement of her tawny hair, which brushed my cheek, as she well knew, this perverse maid! John Cather was not about, and the maid was yielding, as always in his absence; and I was very happy. 'Twas Moses we observed, all this time, doggedly staggering, upon patriotic duty, from the white, swirling weather of that unkind day, in the Queen's service, his bag on his back.

"He've his mother t' guide un," says she.

"An' his father?"

"'Tis said that he was lost," she answered, "in the Year o' the Big Shore Catch; but I'm knowin' nothin' about that."

I remembered the secret Elizabeth would impart to my uncle Nicholas.

"*My* father," says Judith, in challenge, "was a very good man."

I was not disposed to deny it.

"A very good man," she repeated, eying me sharply for any sign of incredulity.

'Twas her fancy: I might indulge it.

"I 'low, Dannie," says she, "that he was a wonderful handsome man, though I never seed un. God's sake!" cries she, defiantly, "he'd be hard t' beat for looks in this here harbor." She was positive; there was no uncertainty — 'twas as though she had known him as fathers are known. And 'twas by no wish of mine, now, that our hands came close together, that her eyes were bent without reserve upon my own, that she snuggled up to my great, boyish body: 'twas wholly a wish of the maid. "'Twas blue eyes he had," says she, "an' yellow hair an' big shoulders. He was a parson, Dannie," she proceeded. "I 'low he must have been. He—he—*was!*" she declared; "he was a great, big parson with blue eyes." I would not be a parson, thinks I, whatever the maid might wish. "An' he 'lowed," she continued, pursuing her wilful fancy, "that he'd come back, some day, an' love my mother as she knowed he could." We watched Moses Shoos come across the harbor ice and break open the door of the postmaster's cottage. "But he was wrecked an' drowned," says Judith, "an' 'twas an end of my mother's hope. 'Twas on'y that," says she, "that she would tell Skipper

Nicholas on the night she died. 'Twas just the wish that he would bring me up, as he've fetched up you, Dannie," she added: "jus' that—an' the name o' my father. I'm not sorry," says she, with her head on my shoulder, "that she never told the name."

Elizabeth carried her secret into the greater mystery to which she passed; 'twas never known to us, nor to any one. . . .

"Moses," says I, in delight, when the news got abroad, "I hears you got the contract for the mail?"

"I is," says he.

"An' how in the name o' Heaven," I demanded, "did you manage so great a thing?"

There had been competition, I knew: there had been consideration and consultation—there had been the philosophy of the aged concerning the carrying of mail in past years, the saucy anarchy of the young with regard to the gruelling service, the chatter of wishful women upon the spending value of the return, the speculatively saccharine brooding of children—there had been much sage prophecy and infinitely knowing advice—there had been misleading and secrecy and sly devising—there had been envy, bickering, disruption of friendship—there had been a lavish waste and disregard of character—there had been all this, as I knew, and more pitiable still, in competition for the weekly four dollars of government money. 'Twas a most marvellous achievement, thinks I, that the fool of Twist Tickle had from this still weather of reason and tempest of feeling

emerged with the laurel of wisdom (as my tutor said) to crown him. 'Twas fair hard to credit! I must know the device—the clever political trick—by which the wags and wiseacres of Twist Tickle had been discomfited. 'Twas with this hungry curiosity that I demanded of the fool of Twist Tickle how he had managed so great a thing.

"Eh, Moses," says I; "how *was* it?"

"Dannie," he gravely explained, "'tis very simple. My bid," says he, impressively, "was the lowest."

"An' how much was that, Moses?"

"Mother," he observed, "didn't hold a wonderful lot with half measures."

'Twas no answer to my question.

"She always 'lowed," says he, with a mystifyingly elaborate wave and accent, "that *doin'* was better than *gettin'*."

I still must wait.

"'Moses,' says she," he pursued, "'don't you mind the price o' fish; you *catch* un. Fish,' says she, 'is fish; but prices goes up an' down, accordin' t' the folly o' men. You *do*,' says she; 'an' you leave what you *gets* t' take care of itself.' An' I 'low," says Moses, gently, a smile transfiguring his vacant face, "that mother knowed."

'Twas all, it seemed to me, a defensive argument.

"An' mother 'lowed, afore she died," he added, looking up to a gray sky, wherein a menace of snow dwelt, "that a good man would save his Queen from rascals."

"Ay," I complained; "but what *was* the bid that won from Eli Flack?"

"The bid?"

"Ay; the bid."

"Not expensive," says he.

"But how much, Moses?"

"Well, Dannie," he answered, with a sigh and a rub of his curly, yellow beard, "I 'lowed mother wouldn't charge much for servin' the Queen: for," says he, enlivened, "'twould be too much like common labor t' carry Her Majesty's mail at a price. An' I bid," he added, eying me vaguely, "accordin' t' what I 'lowed mother would have me do in the Queen's service. *Fac' is, Dannie,*" says he, in a squall of confidence, "*I 'lowed I'd carry it free!*"

'Twas this contact with the world of Jimmie Tick's Cove that embarked the fool upon an adventurous enterprise. When, in the spring of that year, the sea being open, the *Quick as Wink* made our harbor, the first of all the traders, Tumm, the clerk, was short-handed for a cook, having lost young Billy Rudd overboard, in a great sea, beating up in stress of weather to the impoverished settlement at Diamond Run. 'Twas Moses, the choice of necessity, he shipped in the berth of that merry, tow-headed lad of tender voice, whose songs, poor boy! would never again be lifted, o' black nights in harbor, in the forecastle of the *Quick as Wink*. "Ay, Dannie," says Moses, "you'd never think it, maybe, but I'm shipped along o' Tumm for the French

shore an' the Labrador ports. I've heared tell a wonderful lot about Mother Burke, but I've never seed the ol' rock; an' I've heared tell a wonderful lot about Coachman's Cove an' Conch an' Lancy Loop an' the harbors o' the straits shores, but I've never seed un with my own eyes, an' I'm sort o' wantin' t' know how they shapes up alongside o' Twist Tickle. I 'low," says he, "you don't find many harbors in the world like Twist Tickle. Since I been travellin' t' Jimmie Tick's Cove with the mail," he continued, with a stammer and flush, like a man misled from an austere path by the flesh-pots of earth, "I've cotched a sinful hankerin' t' see the world."

I wished he had not.

"But mother," he added, quickly, in self-defence, "always 'lowed a man *ought* t' see the world. So," says he, "I'm shipped along o' Tumm, for better or for worse, an' I'm bound down north in the *Quick as Wink* with the spring supplies."

'Twas a far journey for that sensitive soul.

"Dannie," he asked, in quick alarm, a fear so sudden and unexpected that I was persuaded of the propriety of my premonition, "what you thinkin' about? Eh, Dannie?" he cried. "What you lookin' that way for?"

I would not tell him that I knew the skipper of the *Quick as Wink*, whose butt the fool must be.

"You isn't 'lowin'," Moses began, "that mother—"

"Not at all, Moses!" says I.

'Twas instant and complete relief he got from this denial. "We sails," says he, with all a traveller's im-

portance, "at dawn o' to-morrow. I'll be gone from Twist Tickle by break o' day. I'll be gone t' new places—t' harbors I've heared tell of but never seed with my own eyes. I'm not quite knowin'," says he, doubtfully, "how I'll get along with the cookin'. Mother always 'lowed," he continued, with a greater measure of hope, "that I was more'n fair on cookin' a cup o' tea. 'Moses,' says she, 'you can brew a cup o' tea so well as any fool I ever knowed.' But that was on'y mother," he added, in modest self-deprecation. "Jus' mother."

I wished again that the fool had not fallen into the mercilessly facetious company of Skipper Saucy Bill North of the schooner *Quick as Wink*.

"An', Dannie," says Moses, "I'm scared I'll fail with all but the tea."

'Twas come near the evening of that mellow Sunday. On the Whisper Cove road and the greening hills of Twin Islands, where Moses and I had walked in simple companionship, the birds had been mating and nesting in the thick sunshine of the afternoon. Chirp and flutter and shrill song! 'Twas a time for the mating of birds. The haste and noise and pomposity of this busy love-making! The loud triumph and soft complaint of it! All the world of spruce and alder and sunlit spaces had been a-flutter. But the weather was now fallen gloomy, the sky overcast, the wind blowing in from the black, uneasy sea, where floes and gigantic bergs of ice drifted, like frozen ghosts, cold and dead and aimlessly driven; and the hopeful sunshine had left the hills, and the piping and chirping were stilled, and I heard no

more fluttering wings or tender love-songs. The fool of Twist Tickle paused in the road to stare vacantly northward. 'Twas there dark with menacing clouds—thick, sombre clouds, tinged with a warning blue, rising implacably above the roughening black of the sea. He wondered, it may be, in his dull, weakling way, concerning the coasts beyond the grave curtain, which he must discover—new coasts, dealing with us variously, as we disclose them to our hearts. I watched him with misgiving. To be sure, the skipper of the *Quick as Wink* was an unkind man, cynical and quick to seek selfish laughter, whatever the wound he dealt; but Tumm, our friend and the genial friend of all the world, thinks I, more hopefully, would not have the poor fool wronged.

"Dannie," says Moses, turning, "I'm scared my cookin' won't quite fit the stomachs o' the crew o' the *Quick as Wink*."

"Ay, Moses," says I, to hearten him; "but never a good man was that didn't fear a new task."

He eyed me doubtfully.

"An'," I began, "your mother, Moses—"

"But," he interrupted, "mother wasn't quite t' be trusted in all things."

"Not trusted!" I cried.

"You'll not misunderstand me, Dannie?" he besought me, putting a hand on my shoulder. "You'll not misunderstand, will you? But mother wasn't *quite* t' be trusted," says he, "when it come t' the discussion," says he, pausing to permit a proper appreciation of the

learned word, which he had appropriated from my tutor's vocabulary, "o' my accomplishments."

It had never occurred before.

"For mother," he explained, "was somehow wonderful fond o' me."

The church-bell called him.

"Hear her voice, Dannie?" said he. "Hear her voice in that there bell? 'Come—dear!' says she. 'Come—dear! Come—dear!' Hear it ring out? 'Come—dear! Come—dear! Come—dear!'"

I bade him God-speed with a heart that misgave me.

"I'll answer," said he, his face lifted to the sky, "to that voice!"

The clouds in the west broke, and through the rift a shaft of sunlight shot, glad to be free, and touched our world of sea and rock with loving finger-tips, but failed, as I turned homeward, hearing no voice of my unknown mother in the wandering call of the bell; and all the world went gray and sullenly mute, as it had been. . . .

XIX

A WORD OF WARNING

PRESENTLY my uncle and I made ready to set out for St. John's upon the sinister business which twice a year engaged his evil talents at the wee water-side place wherein he was the sauciest dog in the pack. There was now no wandering upon the emotionless old hills of Twin Islands to prepare him, no departure from the fishing, no unseemly turning to the bottle, to factitious rage; but he brooded more despairingly in his chair by the window when the flare of western glory left the world. At evening, when he thought me gone upon my pleasure, I watched him from the shadows of the hall, grave with youth, wishing, all the while, that he might greet the night with gratitude for the mercy of it; and I listened to his muttering—and I saw that he was grown old and weak with age: unequal, it might be, to the wickedness he would command in my service. "*For behold the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with the flames of fire.*" For me 'twas still sweet to watch the tender shadows creep upon the

western fire, to see the great gray rocks dissolve, to hear the sea's melodious whispering; but to him the sea spoke harshly and the night came with foreboding. I wished that he would forsake the evil he followed for my sake. I would be a club-footed, paddle-punt fisherman, as the gray little man from St. John's had said, and be content with that fortune, could my uncle but look into the eyes of night without misgiving.

But I must not tell him so. . . .

We left John Cather behind.

"Uncle Nick," says I, "I 'low we'd best have un along."

"An' why?" cries he.

"I don't know," says I, honestly puzzled.

He looked at me quizzically. "Is you sure?" he asked. His eyes twinkled. "Is you sure you doesn't know?"

"I don't know," I answered, frowning. "I don't know at all."

"Dannie," says he, significantly, "'tisn't time *yet* for John Cather t' go t' St. John's. You got t' take your chance."

"What chance?" I demanded.

"I don't know," says he.

I scowled.

"But," says he, "an I was you I wouldn't fear on no account whatever. No," he repeated, "*I* wouldn't fear —an I was you."

So John Cather was left with Judy and the watchful

maid-servant who loved her, having no child of her own, when my uncle and I fared out of the tickle upon the outside boat. I was troubled in the dark and wash and heave of that night, but could not for the life of me tell why. John Cather had bade me good-bye with a heartening laugh and clap on the shoulder. 'Twas with gratitude—and sure persuasion of unworthiness—that I remembered his affection. And Judy had given me a sisterly kiss of farewell which yet lingered upon my lips so warmly that in my perplexity I was conscious of it lying there and must like a thirsty man feel the place her moist mouth had touched. 'Twas grief, thinks I, because of parting with my friend John Cather; and I puzzled no longer, but devoted myself to the accomplishment of manners, as I had been taught, and now attended with interest, having grown old and wise. 'Twas rainy weather, windy, with the sea in an ugly pother off the rocks of our hard coast. 'Twas wet, blustering weather, indeed, all the hapless time we were gone from Twist Tickle: the tap-rooms of St. John's, I recall, disagreeably steamed and reeked. My uncle put me to bed that night with a motherly injunction to recite the twenty-third psalm for safety against the perils of the sea and the machinations of wicked men, and to regard the precepts of the noble Lord Chesterfield for guidance in more difficult waters: the man being quite sober for the first time in all my life upon these occasions of departure.

"Dannie, lad," says he, "you cling t' that there little anchor I'm give ye t' hold to."

I asked him mechanically what that was.

"The twenty-third psa'm," says he.

To this I promised.

"An', Dannie," says he, drawing the great bandanna handkerchief from his trousers-pocket to blow his nose, "don't ye be gettin' lonely: for Dannie—"

I must sharply attend.

"I'm for'ard," he declared, "standin' by!"

He could not perceive, poor man! that I was no longer to be dealt with as a child.

There befell me in the city a singular encounter. 'Twas of a soggy, dismal day: there was a searching wind abroad, I recall, to chill the marrow of impoverished folk, a gray light upon all the slimy world, a dispiriting fog flowing endlessly in scowling clouds over the hills to thicken and eddy and drip upon the streets and harbor. It being now at the crisis of my uncle's intoxication, I was come from my hotel alone, wandering without aim, to speed the anxious hours. Abreast of the familiar door of the Anchor and Chain, where long ago I had gratefully drunk with Cap'n Jack Large, I paused; and I wondered, as I stared at the worn brass knob, now broken into beads of cold sweat with the weather, whether or not I might venture some persuasion upon my perverse uncle, but was all at once plucked by the tail of my coat, and turned in a rage to resent the impudence. 'Twas but a scrawny, brass-buttoned boy, however, with an errand for the lad with the rings, as they called me. I followed, to be sure, and

was by this ill-nourished messenger led to the crossing of King Street with Water, where my uncle was used to tap-tapping the pavement. Thence in a moment we ascended to a group of office-rooms, on the opposite side of the street, wherein, having been ceremoniously ushered, I found the gray stranger who had called me a club-footed, ill-begotten young whelp, on that windy night at Twist Tickle, and had with meaning complacency threatened my uncle's assassination.

I had not expected it.

"Ha!" snaps he. "Here you are, eh?"

To my amazement.

"You know me?" he demanded.

I did not know his quality, which seemed, however, by the state he dwelt in, by the deference he commanded from the scrawny, brass-buttoned, ill-nourished, tragically obsequious child who had fetched me, to be of distinction.

"Sit down," he bade me.

I would not.

"Well, well!" cries he. "You've manners as brief as your memory."

'Twas a vivid recollection that had shorn my manner to the bare. My uncle had not been quick enough to sweep the lamp from the table: I remembered this man. 'Twas he who had of that windy night most cruelly damned me; 'twas he who had struck my uncle.

"I've not forgot you, sir," says I.

He was gray: he was indeed most incredibly gray—gray of hair and eye and brow and flesh, gray of mood

and outlook upon the world, forever dwelling, as it seemed, in a gray fog of suspicion and irascibility. I was gone over, from pate to shrinking club-foot, with more intimate and intelligently curious observation than ever a 'longshore jack or coast-wise skipper had achieved in the years when I wore rings. Never before had I suffered a stare more keen and unabashed: 'twas an assurance stripped of insolence by some tragical need and right. He sat beyond a broad, littered table, leaning forward upon it, his back to the riley light, his drawn face nestled within the lean, white hands of him; and 'twas now a brooding inspection I must bear—an unself-conscious thing, remote from my feeling, proceeding from eyes as gray as winter through narrow slits that rapidly snapped shut and flashed open in spasmodic winking. He was a man of fashion, of authority, of large affairs, it seemed—a gentleman, according to my uncle's code and fashion-plates. But he was now by my presence so wretchedly detached from the great world he moved in that for a moment I was stirred to pity him. What had this masterful little man, thinks I, to fear from Dannie Callaway of Twist Tickle?

Enough, as it turned out; but 'twas all an unhappy mystery to me on that drear, clammy day.

"Come, sir!" says I, in anger. "You've fetched me here?"

He seemed not to hear.

"What you wantin' of me?" I brusquely asked.

"Yes," says he, sighing; "you are here, aren't you?" He fingered the papers on his table in a way so desultory

and weak that once more I was moved to pity him. Then, with blank eyes, and hopelessly hanging lip, a lean finger still continuing to rustle the forgotten documents, he looked out of the window, where 'twas all murky and dismal, harbor and rocky hill beyond obliterated by the dispiriting fog. "I wish to warn you," he continued. "You think, perhaps," he demanded, looking sharply into my eyes, "that you are kin of mine?"

I had no such dreadful fear, and, being an unkind lad, frankly told him.

"You dream," he pursued, "that you were born to some station?"

I would not have him know.

"Daniel," says he, with a faint twinkle of amusement and pity, "tell me of that wretched dream."

'Twas a romantic hope that had lingered with me despite my wish to have it begone: but I would not tell this man. I had fancied, as what lad would not? but with no actual longing, because of love for Judith, that the ultimate revelation would lift me high in the world. But now, in the presence of this gray personage, under his twinkle and pitying grin, the fancy forever vanished from me. 'Twas comforting to know, at any rate, that I might wed Judith without outrage. There would be small difficulty, then, thinks I, in winning the maid; and 'twas most gratifying to know it.

"Daniel," says he, in distress, "has that rascally Top misled you to this ridiculously romantic conclusion?"

"No, sir," I answered.

"You are the son," he declared, with thin-lipped de-

liberation, by which I was persuaded and sorely chagrined, "of Tom Callaway, who was lost, with all hands but the chiefest rascal it has been my lot to encounter, in the wreck of the *Will-o'-the-Wisp*. Tom Callaway, master: he was your father. Your mother," he continued, "was a St. John's water-side maid—a sweet and lovely wife, who died when you were born. I was myself not indifferent to her most pure and tender charms. There is your pedigree," says he, his voice fallen kind. "No mystery, you see—no romance. Tom Callaway, master: he was your father. This man Top," he snapped, "this vulgar, drunken, villanous fellow, into whose hands you have unhappily fallen and by whose mad fancies you will inevitably be ruined, is the sole survivor of the *Will-o'-the-Wisp*, with which your father very properly went down. He is nothing to you—nothing—neither kith nor kin! He is an intruder upon you: he has no natural right to your affection; nor have you a natural obligation to regard him. He has most viciously corrupted you into the fantastic notion that you are of gentle and fortunate birth. With what heart, in God's name!" the gray man cried, clapping his lean hands in a passion, "he will face you when he must disclose the truth, I cannot conceive. Mad! The man is stark mad: for tell you he must, though he has in every way since your childhood fostered within you a sense of honor that will break in contempt upon him! Your attitude, I warn you, will work wretchedness to you both; you will accuse and flout him. Daniel," the man solemnly asked, "do you believe me?"

I was glad to know that my mother had been both sweet and lovely. 'Twas a conception I had long cherished. 'Twas what Judith was—both sweet and lovely.

"You will accuse him, I warn you!" he repeated.

Still gray weather, I observed through the grimy panes: fog sweeping by with a northeast wind. For a moment I watched the dripping passengers on the opposite pavement.

"Well," says the gray stranger, with a harsh little laugh, "God help Top when the tale is told!"

I should never, of course, treat my uncle with unkindness.

"My boy," he most earnestly besought me, "will you not heed me?"

"I'll hear you, sir," I answered.

"Attend, then," says he. "I have brought you here to warn you, and my warning is but half spoken. Frankly, in this I have no concern for your happiness, with which I have nothing to do: I have been moved to this ungrateful and most dangerous interview by a purely selfish regard for my own career. Do you know the word? A political career of some slight importance," he added, with a toss of the head, "which is now menaced, at a most critical moment, by that merciless, wicked old pirate whom you have shamelessly been deceived into calling your uncle Nicholas. To be frank with you, you are, and have been for several years, an obstacle. My warning, however, as you will believe, is advanced upon grounds advantageous to yourself. Put the illusions of this designing old bay-noddie away from

you," says he, now accentuating his earnestness with a lean, white forefinger. "Rid yourself of these rings and unsuitable garments: they disgrace you. When the means of their possession is disclosed to you—when the wretched crime of it is made known—you will suffer such humiliation as you did not dream a man could feel. Put 'em away. Put 'em out of sight and mind. Send that young man from London back to the business he came from. A tutor! Your tutor! Tom Callaway's son with an English tutor! You are being made a ghastly fool of; and I warn you that you will pay for every moment of the illusion. Poor lad!" cries he, in genuine distress. "Poor lad!"

It might be: I had long thought so.

"And as for this grand tour abroad," he began, with an insolently curling lip, "why, for God's sake! don't be a—"

"Sir!" I interrupted, in a rage.

There had been talk of a trip abroad: it seemed I was bound upon it, by advice of Sir Harry, to further my education and to cure my foot of its twist.

"Well," the gray personage laughed, "being what you are, remembering what I have with candor and exact honesty told you, if you can permit this old pirate—"

I stopped him. I would have no more of it—not I, by Heaven!

"This extortionate old—"

"I'll not hear it!" I roared.

"In this fine faith," sneers he, "I find at least the

gratifying prospect of being some day privileged to observe Top broil as on a griddle in hell."

'Twas most obscure.

"I refer," says he, "to the moment of grand climax when this pirate tells you where your diamonds came from. Your diamonds?" he flashed. "You may get quit of your diamonds; but the fine gentleman this low villain has fashioned of a fishing-skipper's whelp will all your days keep company at your elbow. And you won't love Top for this," says he, with malevolent satisfaction; "you won't love Top!"

I walked to the window for relief from him. 'Twas all very well that he should discredit and damn my uncle in this way; 'twas all very well that he should raise spectres of unhappiness before me: but there, on the opposite pavement, abroad in the foggy wind, jostled by ill-tempered passengers, was this self-same old foster-father of mine, industriously tap-tapping the pavement with his staff, as he had periodically done, whatever the weather, since I could remember the years of my life. I listened to the angry tapping, watched the urchins and curious folk gather for the show; and I was moved to regard the mystifying spectacle with an indulgent grin. The gray stranger, however, at that instant got ear of the patter of the staff and the clamor of derision. He cried upon me sharply to stand from the window; but I misliked this harsh manner of authority, and would not budge: whereupon he sprang upon me, caught me about the middle, and violently flung me back. 'Twas too late to avert the catastrophe: my uncle had

observed me, and was even then bound across the street, flying all sail, to the terrified confusion of the exalted political personage whose career he menaced. 'Twas a pitiable spectacle of fright and helpless uncertainty the man furnished, seeming at one moment bent on keeping my uncle out, whom he feared to admit, at another to wish him well in, whom he dared not exclude.

"The man's stark mad!" he would repeat, in his panic of gesture and pacing. "The man's stark mad to risk this!"

My uncle softly closed the door behind him. "Ah, Dannie!" says he. "You here?" He was breathless, and gone a ghastly color; there was that about his scars and eyes, too, to make me wonder whether 'twas rage or fear had mastered him: I could not tell, but mightily wished to determine, since it seemed that some encounter impended. "Ye're an unkind man," says he, in a passionless way, to the gray stranger, who was now once more seated at his desk, fingering the litter of documents. "Ye've broke your word t' me. I must punish ye for the evil ye've done this lad. I'll not ask ye what ye've told un till I haves my way with ye; but then," he declared, his voice betraying a tremor of indignation, "I'll have the talk out o' ye, word for word!" The gray stranger was agitated, but would not look up from his aimlessly wandering hand to meet my uncle's lowering, reproachful eyes. "Dannie," says my uncle, continuing in gentle speech, "pass the cushion from the big chair. Thank 'e, lad. I'm not wantin' the man t' hurt his head." He cast the cushion to the floor.

"Now, sir," says he, gently, "an ye'll be good enough t' step within five-foot-ten o' that there red cushion, I'll knock ye down an' have it over with."

The man looked sullenly out of the window.

"Five-foot-ten, sir," my uncle repeated, with some cheerfulness.

"Top," was the vicious response, "you invite assassination."

My uncle put his hand on my shoulder. "'Tis not fit for ye t' see, lad," says he. "Ye'd best be off t' the fresh air. 'Tis so wonderful stuffy here that ye'll be growin' pale an ye don't look out. An' I'm not wantin' ye t' see me knock a man down," he repeated, with feeling. "I'm not wantin' ye even t' *think* that I'd do an unkind thing like that."

I moved to go.

"Now, sir!" cries my uncle to the stranger.

As I closed the door behind me the man was passing with snarling lips to the precise spot my uncle had indicated. . . .

XX

NO APOLOGY

MY uncle knocked on my door at the hotel and, without waiting to be bidden, thrust in his great, red, bristling, monstrously scarred head. 'Twas an intrusion most diffident and fearful: he was like a mischievous boy come for chastisement.

"You here, Dannie?" he gently inquired.

"Come in, sir," says I.

'Twas awkwardly—with a bashful grin and halting, doubtful step—that he stumped in.

"Comfortable?" he asked, looking about. "No complaint t' make ag'in this here hotel?"

I had no complaint.

"Not troubled, is you?"

I was not troubled.

"Isn't bothered, is you?" he pursued, with an inviting wink. "Not bothered about nothin', lad, is you?"

Nor bothered.

"Come now!" cries he, dissembling great candor and heartiness, "is you got any questions t' ask ol' Nick Top?"

"No, sir," I answered, quite confidently.

"Dannie, lad," says my uncle, unable to contain his delight, with which, indeed, his little eyes brimmed over, "an ye'd jus' be so damned good as t' tweak that there—"

I pulled the bell-cord.

"A nip o' the best Jamaica," says he.

Old Elihu Wall fetched the red dram.

"Lad," says my uncle, his glass aloft, his eyes resting upon me in pride, his voice athrill with passionate conviction, "here's t' *you!* That's good o' you," says he. "That's very good. I 'low I've fetched ye up very well. Ecod!" he swore, with most reverent and gentle intention, "ye'll be a gentleman afore ye knows it!"

He downed the liquor with a grin that came over his lurid countenance like a burst of low sunshine.

"A gentleman," he repeated, "in spite o' Chesterfield!"

When my uncle was gone, I commanded my reflections elsewhere, prohibited by honor from dwelling upon the wretched mystery in which I was enmeshed. They ran with me to the fool of Twist Tickle. The weather had turned foul: 'twas blowing up from the north in a way to make housed folk shiver for their fellows at sea. Evil sailing on the Labrador! I wondered how the gentle weakling fared as cook of the *Quick as Wink*. I wondered in what harbor he lay, in the blustering night, or off what coast he tossed. I wondered what trouble he had within his heart. I wished him home again: but yet remembered, with some rising of hope, that his amazing legacy of wisdom had in all things been suffi-

cient to his need. Had he not in peace and usefulness walked the paths of the world where wiser folk had gone with bleeding feet? 'Twas dwelling gratefully upon this miracle of wisdom and love, a fool's inheritance, that I, who had no riches of that kind, fell asleep, without envy or perturbation, that night.

'Twas not long I had to wait to discover the fortune of the fool upon that voyage. We were not three days returned from the city when the *Quick as Wink* slipped into our harbor. She had been beating up all afternoon; 'twas late of a dark night when she dropped anchor. John Cather was turned in, Judith long ago whisked off to bed by our maid-servant; my uncle and I sat alone together when the rattle of the chain apprised us that the schooner was in the shelter of the Lost Soul.

By-and-by Moses came.

"You've been long on the road," says I.

"Well, Dannie," he explained, looking at his cap, which he was awkwardly twirling, "I sort o' fell in with Parson Stump by the way, an' stopped for a bit of a gossip."

I begged him to sit with us.

"No," says he; "but I'm 'bliged t' you. Fac' is, Dannie," says he, gravely, "I isn't got time."

My uncle was amazed.

"I've quit the ship," Moses went on, "not bein' much of a hand at cookin'. I'll be t' home now," says he, "an' I'd be glad t' have you an' Skipper Nicholas

drop in, some day soon, when you're passin' Whisper Cove."

We watched him twirl his cap.

"You'd find a wonderful warm welcome," says he, "from Mrs. Moses Shoos!"

With that he was gone.

XXI

FOOL'S FORTUNE

"CLOSE the door, Dannie," says Tumm, in the little cabin of the *Quick as Wink*, late that night, when the goods were put to rights, and the bottle was on the counter, and the schooner was nodding sleepily in the spent waves from the open sea. "This here yarn o' the weddin o' Moses Shoos is not good for everybody t' hear." He filled the glasses—chuckling all the time deep in his chest. "We was reachin' up t' Whoopin' Harbor," he began, being a great hand at a story, "t' give the *Quick as Wink* a night's lodgin', it bein' a wonderful windish night; clear enough, the moon sailin' a cloudy sky, but with a bank o' fog sneakin' round Cape Muggy like a fish-thief. An' we wasn't in no haste, anyhow, t' make Sinners' Tickle, for we was the first trader down this season, an' 'twas pick an' choose for we, with a clean bill t' every harbor from Starvation Cove t' the Settin' Hen. So the skipper he says we'll hang the ol' girl up t' Whoopin' Harbor 'til dawn; an' we'll all have a watch below, says he, with a cup o' tea, says he, if the cook can bile the water 'ithout burnin' it. Now, look you! Saucy Bill North is wonderful fond

of his little joke; an' 'twas this here habit o' burnin' the water he'd pitched on t' plague the poor cook with, since we put out o' Twist Tickle on the v'y'ge down.

"'Cook, you dunderhead!' says the skipper, with a wink t' the crew, which I was sorry t' see, 'you been an' scarched the water agin.'

"Shoos he looked like he'd give up for good on the spot—just like he *knowed* he was a fool, an' *had* knowed it for a long, long time—sort o' like he was sorry for we an' sick of hisself.

"'Cook,' says the skipper, 'you went an' done it agin. Yes, you did! Don't you go denyin' of it. You'll kill us, cook,' says he, 'if you goes on like this. They isn't nothin' worse for the system,' says he, 'than this here burned water. The almanacs,' says he, shakin' his finger at the poor cook, ''ll tell you *that!*'

"'I 'low I did burn that water, skipper,' says the cook, 'if you says so. But I isn't got all my wits,' says he; 'an' God knows I'm doin' my best!'

"'I always did allow, cook,' says the skipper, 'that God knowed more'n I ever thunk.'

"'An' I never *did* burn no water,' says the cook, 'afore I shipped along o' you in this here ol' flour-sieve of a *Quick as Wink*.'

"'This here *what?*' snaps the skipper.

"'This here ol' basket,' says the cook.

"'Basket!' says the skipper. Then he hummed a bit o' 'Fishin' for the Maid I Loves,' 'ithout thinkin' much about the toon. 'Cook,' says he 'I loves you. You is

on'y a half-witted chance-child,' says he, 'but I loves you like a brother.'

"'Does you, skipper?' says the cook, with a nice, soft little smile, like the poor fool he was. 'I isn't by no means hatin' you, skipper,' says he. 'But I can't *help* burnin' the water,' says he, 'an' I 'low it fair hurts me t' get blame for it. I'm sorry for you an' the crew,' says he, 'an' I wisht I hadn't took the berth. But when I shipped along o' you,' says he, 'I 'lowed I *could* cook, for mother always told me so, an' I 'lowed she knowed. I'm doin' my best, anyhow, accordin' t' how she'd have me do, an' I 'low if the water gets scarched,' says he, 'the galley fire's bewitched.'

"'Basket!' says the skipper. 'Ay, ay, cook,' says he. 'I just *loves* you.'

"They wasn't a man o' the crew liked t' hear the skipper say that; for, look you! the skipper doesn't know nothin' about feelin's, an' the cook has more feelin's 'n a fool can make handy use of aboard a tradin' craft. There sits the ol' man, smoothin' his big, red beard, singin' 'I'm Fishin' for the Maid I Loves,' while he looks at poor Moses Shoos, which was washin' up the dishes, for we was through with the mug-up. An' the devil was in his eyes—the devil was fair grinnin' in them little blue eyes. Lord! it made me sad t' see it, for I knowed the cook was in for bad weather, an' he isn't no sort o' craft t' be out o' harbor in a gale o' wind like that.

"'Cook,' says the skipper.

"'Ay, sir?' says the cook.

"'Cook,' says the skipper, 'you ought t' get married.'

"'I on'y wisht I could,' says the cook.

"'You ought t' try, cook,' says the skipper, 'for the sake o' the crew. We'll all die,' says he, 'afore we sights ol' Bully Dick agin,' says he, 'if you keeps on burnin' the water. You *got* t' get married, cook, t' the first likely maid you sees on the Labrador,' says he, 't' save the crew. She'd do the cookin' for you. It 'll be the loss o' all hands,' says he, 'an you don't. This here burned water,' says he, 'will be the end of us, cook, an you keeps it up.'

"'I'd be wonderful glad t' 'blige you, skipper,' says the cook, 'an' I'd like t' 'blige all hands. 'Twon't be by my wish,' says he, 'that anybody 'll die o' the grub they gets, for mother wouldn't like it.'

"'Cook,' says the skipper, 'shake! I knows a *man*,' says he, 'when I sees one. Any man,' says he, 'that would put on the irons o' matrimony,' says he, 't' 'blige a shipmate,' says he, 'is a better man 'n me, an' I loves un like a brother.'

"The cook was cheered up considerable.

"'Cook,' says the skipper, 'I 'pologize. Yes, I do, cook,' says he, 'I 'pologize.'

"'I isn't got no feelin' ag'in' matrimony,' says the cook. 'But I isn't able t' get took. I been tryin' every maid t' Twist Tickle,' says he, 'an' they isn't one,' says he, 'will wed a fool.'

"'Not *one* maid t' wed a fool!" says the skipper.

"'Nar a one,' says the cook.

"'I'm s'prised,' says the skipper.

"'Nar a maid t' Twist Tickle,' says the cook, 'will wed a fool, an' I 'low they isn't one,' says he, 'on the Labrador.'

"'It's been done afore, cook,' says the skipper, 'an' I 'low 'twill be done agin, if the world don't come to an end t' oncet. Cook,' says he, 'I *knows* the maid t' do it.'

"'I'd be wonderful glad t' find *she*,' says the cook. 'Mother,' says he, 'always 'lowed a man didn't ought t' live alone.'

"'Ay, b'y,' says the skipper, 'I got the girl for *you*. An' she isn't a thousand miles,' says he, 'from where that ol' basket of a *Quick as Wink* lies at anchor,' says he, 'in Whoopin' Harbor. She isn't what you'd call handsome an' tell no lie,' says he, 'but—'

"'Never you mind about that, skipper,' says the cook.

"'No,' says the skipper, 'she isn't handsome, as handsome goes, even in these parts, but—'

"'Never you mind, skipper,' says the cook: 'for mother always 'lowed that looks come off in the first washin'.'

"'I 'low that Liz Jones would take you, cook,' says the skipper. 'You ain't much on wits, but you got a good-lookin' figure-head; an' I 'low she'd be more'n willin' t' skipper a craft like you. You better go ashore, cook, when you gets cleaned up, an' see what she says. Tumm,' says he, 'is sort o' shipmates with Liz,' says he, 'an' I 'low he'll see you through the worst of it.'

"'Will you, Tumm?' says the cook.

"'Well,' says I, 'I'll see.'

"I knowed Liz Jones from the time I fished Whoopin' Harbor with Skipper Bill Topsail in the *Love the Wind*, bein' cotched by the measles thereabouts, which she nursed me through; an' I 'lowed she *would* wed the cook if he asked her, so, thinks I, I'll go ashore with the fool t' see that she don't. No; she isn't handsome—not Liz. I'm wonderful fond o' yarnin' o' good-lookin' maids, as you knows, Skipper Nicholas, sir; but I can't say much o' Liz: for Liz is so far t' l'eward o' beauty that many a time, lyin' sick there in the fo'c's'le o' the *Love the Wind*, I wished the poor girl would turn inside out, for, thinks I, the pattern might be a sight better on the other side. I *will* say she is big and well-muscled; an' muscles, t' my mind, counts enough t' make up for black eyes, but not for cross-eyes, much less for fuzzy whiskers. It ain't in my heart t' make sport o' Liz; but I *will* say she has a bad foot, for she was born in a gale, I'm told, when the *Preacher* was hangin' on off a lee shore 'long about Cape Harrigan, an' the sea was raisin' the devil. An', well—I hates t' say it, but—well, they call her 'Walrus Liz.' No; she isn't handsome, she haven't got no good looks; but once you gets a look into whichever one o' them cross-eyes you is able to cotch, you see a deal more'n your own face; an' she *is* well-muscled, an' I 'low I'm goin' t' tell you so, for I wants t' name her good p'ints so well as her bad. Whatever—

"'Cook,' says I, 'I'll go along o' you.'

"With that Moses Shoos fell to on the dishes, an'

'twasn't long afore he was ready to clean hisself; which done, he was ready for the courtin'. But first he got out his dunny-bag, an' he fished in there 'til he pulled out a blue stockin', tied in a hard knot; an' from the toe o' that there blue stockin' he took a brass ring. 'I 'low,' says he, talkin' to hisself, in the half-witted way he has, 'it won't do no hurt t' give her mother's ring. "Moses," says mother, "you better take the ring off my finger. It isn't no weddin'-ring," says she, "for I never was what you might call wed by a real parson in the fashionable way, but on'y accordin' t' the customs o' the land," says she, "an' I got it from the Jew t' make believe I was wed in the way they does it in these days; for it didn't do nobody no hurt, an' it sort o' pleased me. You better take it, Moses, b'y," says she, "for the dirt o' the grave would only spile it," says she, "an' I'm not wantin' it no more. Don't wear it at the fishin', dear," says she, "for the fishin' is wonderful hard," says she, "an' joolery don't stand much wear an' tear." Oh, mother!' says the cook, 'I done what you wanted!' Then the poor fool sighed an' looked up at the skipper. 'I 'low, skipper,' says he, ''twouldn't do no hurt t' give the ring to a man's wife, would it? For mother wouldn't mind, would she?'

"The skipper didn't answer that.

"'Come, cook,' says I, 'leave us get under way,' for I couldn't stand it no longer.

"So the cook an' me put out in the punt t' land at Whoopin' Harbor, with the crew wishin' the poor cook well with their lips, but thinkin', God knows what! in

their hearts. An' he was in a wonderful state o' fright. I never *seed* a man so took by scare afore. For, look you! poor Moses thinks she might have un. 'I never had half a chance afore,' says he. 'They've all declined in a wonderful regular way. But now,' says he, 'I 'low I'll be took. I jus' *feels* that way; an', Tumm, I—I—I'm scared!' I cheered un up so well as I could; an' by-an'-by we was on the path t' Liz Jones's house, up on Gray Hill, where she lived alone, her mother bein' dead an' her father shipped on a bark from St. John's t' the West Indies. An' we found Liz sittin' on a rock at the turn o' the road, lookin' down from the hill at the *Quick as Wink:* all alone—sittin' there in the moonlight, all alone—thinkin' o' God knows what!

"'Hello, Liz!' says I.

"'Hello, Tumm!' says she. 'What vethel'th that?'

"'That's the *Quick as Wink*, Liz,' says I. 'An' here's the cook o' that there craft,' says I, 'come up the hill t' speak t' you.'

"'That's right,' says the cook. 'Tumm, you're right.'

"'T' thpeak t' *me!*' says she.

"I wisht she hadn't spoke quite that way. Lord! it wasn't nice. It makes a man feel bad t' see a woman put her hand on her heart for a little thing like that.

"'Ay, Liz,' says I, 't' speak t' you. An' I'm thinkin', Liz,' says I, 'he'll say things no man ever said afore—t' you.'

"'That's right, Tumm,' says the cook. 'I wants t'

speak as man t' man,' says he, 't' stand by what I says,' says he, 'accordin' as mother would have me do!'

"Liz got off the rock. Then she begun t' kick at the path; an' she was lookin' down, but I 'lowed she had an eye on Moses all the time. 'For,' thinks I, 'she's sensed the thing out, like all the women.'

"'I'm thinkin',' says I, 'I'll go up the road a bit.'

"'Oh no, you won't, Tumm,' says she. 'You thtay right here. Whath the cook wantin' o' me?'

"'Well,' says the cook, 'I 'low I wants t' get married.'

"'T' get married!' says she.

"'T' get married,' says the cook, 'accordin' as mother would have me; an' I 'low you'll do."

"'Me?' says she.

"'Liz,' says he, as solemn as church, 'I means you.'

"It come to her all of a suddent—an' she begun t' breathe hard, an' pressed her hands against her breast an' shivered. But she looked away t' the moon, an' somehow that righted her.

"'You better thee me in daylight,' says she.

"'Don't you mind about that,' says he. 'Mother always 'lowed that sort o' thing didn't matter: an' she knowed.'

"She put a finger under his chin an' tipped his face t' the light.

"'You ithn't got all your thentheth, ith you?' says she.

"'Well,' says he, 'bein' born on Hollow-eve,' says he, 'I *isn't* quite got all my wits. But,' says he, 'I wisht I had. An' I can't do no more.'

"'An' you wanth t' wed me?' says she. 'Ith you sure you doth?'

"'I got mother's ring,' says the cook, 't' prove it.'

"'Tumm,' says Liz t' me, '*you* ithn't wantin' t' get married, ith you?'

"'No, Liz,' says I. 'Not,' says I, 't' you.'

"'No,' says she. 'Not—t' me.' She took me round the turn in the road. 'Tumm,' says she, 'I 'low I'll wed that man. I wanth t' get away from here,' says she, lookin' over the hills. 'I wanth t' get t' the thouthern outporth, where there'th life. They ithn't no life here. An' I'm tho wonderful tired o' all thith! Tumm,' says she, 'no man ever afore athked me t' marry un, an' I 'low I better take thith one. He'th on'y a fool,' says she,' 'but not even a fool ever come courtin' me, an' I 'low nobody but a fool would. On'y a fool, Tumm!' says she. 'But *I* ithn't got nothin' t' boatht of. God made me,' says she, 'an' I ithn't mad that He done it. I 'low He meant me t' take the firth man that come, an' be content. I 'low *I* ithn't got no right t' thtick up my nothe at a fool. For, Tumm,' says she, 'God made that fool, too. An,' Tumm,' says she, 'I wanth thomethin' elthe. Oh, I wanth thomethin' elthe! I hateth t' tell you, Tumm,' says she, 'what it ith. But all the other maidth hath un, Tumm, an' I wanth one, too. I 'low they ithn't no woman happy without one, Tumm. An' I ithn't never had no chanth afore. No chanth, Tumm, though God knowth they ithn't nothin' I wouldn't do,' says she, 't' get what I wanth! I'll wed the fool,' says she. 'It

ithn't a man I wanth tho much; no, it ithn't a man. Ith—'

"'What you wantin', Liz?' says I.

"'It ithn't a man, Tumm,' says she.

"'No?' says I. 'What is it, Liz?'

"'Ith a baby,' says she.

"God! I felt bad when she told me that. . . ."

Tumm stopped, sighed, picked at a knot in the table. There was silence in the cabin. The *Quick as Wink* was still nodding to the swell—lying safe at anchor in a cove of Twist Tickle. We heard the gusts scamper over the deck and shake the rigging; we caught, in the intervals, the deep-throated roar of breakers, far off—all the noises of the gale. And Tumm picked at the knot with his clasp-knife; and we sat watching, silent, all. And I felt bad, too, because of the maid at Whooping Harbor—a rolling waste of rock, with the moonlight lying on it, stretching from the whispering mystery of the sea to the greater desolation beyond; and an uncomely maid, alone and wistful, wishing, without hope, for that which the hearts of women must ever desire. . . .

"Ay," Tumm drawled, "it made me feel bad t' think o' what she'd been wantin' all them years; an' then I wished I'd been kinder t' Liz. . . . An', 'Tumm,' thinks I, 'you went an' come ashore t' stop this here thing; but you better let the skipper have his little joke, for 'twill on'y s'prise him, an' it won't do nobody else no hurt. Here's this fool,' thinks I, 'wantin' a wife;

an' he won't never have another chance. An' here's this maid,' thinks I, 'wantin' a baby; an' *she* won't never have another chance. 'Tis plain t' see,' thinks I, 'that God A'mighty, who made un, crossed their courses; an' I 'low, ecod!' thinks I, 'that 'twasn't a bad idea He had. If He's got to get out of it somehow,' thinks I, 'why, *I* don't know no better way. Tumm,' thinks I, 'you sheer off. Let Nature,' thinks I, 'have course an' be glorified.' So I looks Liz in the eye—an' says nothin'.

"'Tumm,' says she, 'doth you think he—'

"'Don't you be scared o' nothin',' says I. 'He's a lad o' good feelin's,' says I, 'an' he'll treat you the best he knows how. Is you goin' t' take un?'

"'I wathn't thinkin' o' that,' says she. 'I wathn't thinkin' o' *not*. I wath jutht,' says she, 'wonderin'.'

"'They isn't no sense in that, Liz,' says I. 'You just wait an' find out.'

"'What'th hith name?' says she.

"'Shoos,' says I. 'Moses Shoos.'

"With that she up with her pinny an' begun t' cry like a young swile.

"'What you cryin' for, Liz?' says I.

"I 'low I couldn't tell what 'twas all about. But she was like all the women. Lord! 'tis the little things that makes un weep when it comes t' the weddin'.

"'Come, Liz,' says I, 'what you cryin' about?'

"'I lithp,' says she.

"'I knows you does, Liz,' says I; 'but it ain't nothin' t' cry about.'

"'I can't say Joneth,' says she.

"'No,' says I; 'but you'll be changin' your name,' says I, 'an' it won't matter no more.'

"'An' if I can't say Joneth,' says she, 'I can't thay—'

"'Can't say what?' says I.

"'Can't thay Thooth!' says she.

"Lord! No more she could. An' t' say Moses Shoos! An' t' say Mrs. Moses Shoos! Lord! It give me a pain in the tongue t' think of it.

"'Jutht my luck,' says she; 'but I'll do my betht.'

"So we went back an' told poor Moses Shoos that he didn't have t' worry no more about gettin' a wife; an' he said he was more glad than sorry, an', says he, she'd better get her bonnet, t' go aboard an' get married right away. An' she 'lowed she didn't want no bonnet, but *would* like to change her pinny. So we said we'd as lief wait a spell, though a clean pinny wasn't *needed*. An' when she got back, the cook said he 'lowed the skipper could marry un well enough 'til we overhauled a real parson; an' she thought so, too, for, says she, 'twouldn't be longer than a fortnight, an' *any* sort of a weddin', says she, would do 'til then. An' aboard we went, the cook an' me pullin' the punt, an' she steerin'; an' the cook he crowed an' cackled all the way, like a half-witted rooster; but the maid didn't even cluck, for she was too wonderful solemn t' do anything but look at the moon.

"'Skipper,' said the cook, when we got in the fo'c's'le, 'here she is. *I* isn't afeared,' says he, 'an' *she* isn't afeared; an' now I 'lows we'll have you marry us.'

"Up jumps the skipper; but he was too much s'prised t' say a word.

"'An' I'm thinkin',' says the cook, with a nasty little wink, such as never I seed afore get into the eyes o' Moses Shoos, 'that they isn't a man in this here fo'c's'le,' says he, 'will *say* I'm afeared.'

"'Cook,' says the skipper, takin' the cook's hand, 'shake! I never knowed a man like you afore,' says he. 'T' my knowledge, you're the on'y man in the Labrador fleet would do it. I'm proud,' says he, 't' take the hand o' the man with nerve enough t' marry Walrus Liz o' Whoopin' Harbor.'

"But 'twas a new Moses he had t' deal with. The devil got in the fool's eyes—a jumpin' little brimstone devil, ecod! I never knowed the man could look that way.

"'Ay, lad,' says the skipper, 'I'm proud t' know the man that isn't afeared o' Walrus—'

"'Don't you call her that!' says the cook. 'Don't you do it, skipper!'

"I was lookin' at Liz. She was grinnin' in a holy sort o' way. Never seed nothin' like that afore—no, lads, not in all my life.

"'An' why not, cook?' says the skipper.

"'It ain't her name,' says the cook.

"'It ain't?' says the skipper. 'But I been sailin' the Labrador for twenty year,' says he, 'an' I 'ain't never heared her called nothin' but Walrus—'

"'Don't you do it, skipper!'

"The devil got into the cook's hands then. I seed

his fingers clawin' the air in a hungry sort o' way. An' it looked t' me like squally weather for the skipper.

"'Don't you do it no more, skipper,' says the cook. 'I isn't got no wits,' says he, an' I'm feelin' wonderful queer!'

"The skipper took a look ahead into the cook's eyes. 'Well, cook,' says he, 'I 'low,' says he, 'I won't.'

"Liz laughed—an' got close t' the fool from Twist Tickle. An' I seed her touch his coat-tail, like as if she loved it, but didn't dast do no more.

"'What you two goin' t' do?' says the skipper.

"'We 'lowed you'd marry us,' says the cook, ''til we come across a parson.'

"'I will,' says the skipper. 'Stand up here,' says he. 'All hands stand up!' says he. 'Tumm,' says he, 'get me the first Book you comes across.'

"I got un a Book.

"'Now, Liz,' says he, 'can you cook?'

"'Fair t' middlin',' says she. 'I won't lie.'

"''Twill do,' says he. 'An' does you want t' get married t' this here dam' fool?'

"'An it pleathe you,' says she.

"'Shoos,' says the skipper, 'will you let this woman do the cookin'?'

"'Well, skipper,' says the cook, 'I will; for I don't want nobody t' die o' my cookin' on this here v'y'ge, an' I *knows* that mother wouldn't mind.'

"'An' will you keep out o' the galley?'

"'I 'low I'll *have* to.'

"'An' look you! cook, is you sure—is you *sure*,' says

the skipper, with a shudder, lookin' at the roof, 'that you wants t' marry this here—'

"'Don't you do it, skipper!' says the cook. 'Don't you say that no more! By the Lord!' says he, 'I'll kill you if you does!'

"'Is you sure,' says the skipper, 'that you wants t' marry this here—woman?'

"'I will.'

"'Well,' says the skipper, kissin' the Book, 'I 'low me an' the crew don't care; an' we can't help it, anyhow.'

"'What about mother's ring?' says the cook. 'She might's well have that,' says he, 'if she's careful about the wear an' tear. For joolery,' says he t' Liz, 'don't stand it.'

"'It can't do no harm,' says the skipper.

"'Ith we married, thkipper?' says Liz, when she got the ring on.

"'Well,' says the skipper, 'I 'low that knot 'll hold 'til we puts into Twist Tickle, where Parson Stump can mend it, right under my eye. For,' says he, 'I got a rope's-end an' a belayin'-pin t' *make* it hold,' says he, ''til we gets 'longside o' *some* parson that knows more about matrimonial knots 'n me. We'll pick up your goods, Liz,' says he, 'on the s'uthard v'y'ge. An' I hopes, ol' girl,' says he, 'that you'll be able t' boil the water 'ithout burnin' it.'

"'Ay, Liz,' says the cook, 'I been makin' a awful fist o' b'ilin' the water o' late.'

"She give him one look—an' put her clean pinny to her eyes.

"'What you cryin' about?' says the cook.

"'I don't know,' says she; 'but I 'low 'tith becauthe now I knowth you *ith* a fool!'

"'She's right, Tumm,' says the cook. 'She's got it right! Bein' born on Hollow-eve,' says he, 'I couldn't be nothin' else. But, Liz,' says he, 'I'm glad I got you, fool or no fool.'

"So she wiped her eyes, an' blowed her nose, an' give a little sniff, an' looked up an' smiled.

"'I isn't good enough for you,' says the poor cook. 'But, Liz,' says he, 'if you kissed me,' says he, 'I wouldn't mind a bit. An' they isn't a man in this here fo'c's'le,' says he, lookin' round, 'that 'll *say* I'd mind. Not one,' says he, with the little devil jumpin' in his eyes.

"Then she stopped cryin' for good.

"'Go ahead, Liz!' says he. 'I ain't afeared. Come on!' says he. 'Give us a kiss!'

"'Motheth Thooth,' says she, 'you're the firtht man ever athked me t' give un a kith!'

"She kissed un. 'Twas like a pistol-shot. An', Lord! her poor face was shinin'. . . ."

In the cabin of the *Quick as Wink* we listened to the wind as it scampered over the deck; and my uncle and I watched Tumm pick at the knot in the table.

"He don't *need* no sense," said Tumm, looking up, at last; "for he've *had* a mother, an' he've *got* a memory."

'Twas very true, I thought.

XXII

GATHERING WINDS

'TWAS by advice of Sir Harry, with meet attention to the philosophy of Lord Chesterfield in respect to the particular accomplishments essential to one who would both please and rise in the world, that my uncle commanded the grand tour to further my education and to cure my twisted foot. "'Tis the last leg o' the beat, lad," he pleaded; "ye'll be a gentleman, made t' order, accordin' t' specifications, when 'tis over with; an' I'll be wonderful glad," says he, wearily, "when 'tis done, for I'll miss ye sore, lad—ecod! but I'll miss ye sore." Abroad, then, despite the gray warning, went John Cather and I, tutor and young gentleman, the twain not to be distinguished from a company of high birth. 'Twas a ghastly thing: 'twas a thing so unfit and grotesque that I flush to think of it—a thing, of all my uncle's benefits, I wish undone and cannot to this day condone. But that implacable, most tender old ape, when he bade us God-speed on the wharf, standing with legs and staff triangularly disposed to steady him, rippled with pride and admiration to observe the genteel performance of our departure, and in the intervals of

mopping his red, sweaty, tearful countenance, exhibited, in unwitting caricature, the defiant consciousness of station he had with infinite pains sought to have me master.

"Made t' order, lad," says he, at last, when he took my hand, "accordin' t' the plans an' specifications o' them that knows, an' quite regardless of expense."

I patted him on the shoulder.

"I wisht," says he, with a regretful wag, "that Tom Callaway could see ye now. You an' your tooter! If on'y Tom Callaway *could!* I bet ye 'twould perk un up a bit in the place he's to! 'Twould go a long way towards distractin' his mind," says he, "from the fire an' fumes they talks so much about in church."

You will be good enough to believe, if you please, that there were sympathetic tears in my uncle's eyes. . . .

Upon this misguided mission we were gone abroad two years and a fortnight (deducting one day): and pursuing it we travelled far. And we came to magnificent cities, and beheld the places and things that are written of in books, and ate of curious foods, and observed many sorts of people and singular customs, and fell in with strange companions, and sojourned in many houses; but from the spectacle of the world I caught no delight, nor won a lesson, nor gained in anything, save, it may be, in knowledge of the book of my own heart. As we went our way in new paths, my mind dwelt continually with Judith, whom I loved: the vision of her face, wistful and most fair in the mirage of Twist

Tickle, and the illusion of her voice, whispering from the vacant world, were the realities of these wanderings—the people and palaces a fantasy. Of this I said nothing to John Cather, who was himself cast down by some obscure ailment of the spirit, so that I would not add to his melancholy with my love-sickness, but rather sought by cheerful behavior to mitigate the circumstances of his sighs, which I managed not at all. And having journeyed far in this unhappy wise, we came again to the spacious sea and sky and clean air of Twist Tickle, where Judith was with my uncle on the neck of land by the Lost Soul, and the world returned to its familiar guise of coast and ocean and free winds, and the *Shining Light*, once more scraped and refitted against the contingencies of my presence, awaited the ultimate event in the placid waters of Old Wives' Cove. . . .

Judith was grown to womanly age and ways and perfected in every maidenly attraction. When she came shyly from the shadows of the house into the glowing sunset and spring weather of our landing, I stopped, amazed, in the gravelled walk of our garden, because of the incredible beauty of the maid, now first revealed in bloom, and because of her modesty, which was yet slyly aglint with coquetry, and because of the tender gravity of her years, disclosed in the first poignant search of the soul I had brought back from my long journeying. I thought, I recall, at the moment of our meeting, that laboring in a mood of highest exalta-

tion God had of the common clay fashioned a glory of person unsuspected of the eager, evil world out of which I had come: I rejoiced, I know, that He had in this bleak remoteness hidden it from the eyes of the world. I fancied as she came—'twas all in a flash—that into this rare creation He had breathed a spirit harmonious with the afflatus of its conception. And being thus overcome and preoccupied, I left the maid's coy lips escape me, but kissed her long, slender-fingered hand, which she withdrew, at once, to give to John Cather, who was most warm and voluble in greeting. I was by this hurt; but John Cather was differently affected: it seemed he did not care. He must be off to the hills, says he, and he must go alone, instantly, at the peril of his composure, to dwell with his mind, says he, upon the thoughts that most elevated and gratified him. I watched him off upon the Whisper Cove road with improper satisfaction, for, thinks I, most ungenerously, I might now, without the embarrassment of his presence, which she had hitherto rejected, possess Judith's lips; but the maid was shy and perverse, and would have none of it, apprising me sweetly of her determination.

By this I was again offended.

"Judy," says my uncle, when we were within, "fetch the bottle. Fetch the bottle, maid!" cries he; "for 'tis surely an occasion."

Judith went to the pantry.

"Dannie," my uncle inquired, leaning eagerly close when she was gone from the room, "is ye been good?"

'Twas a question put in anxious doubt: I hesitated—wondering whether or not I had been good.

"Isn't ye?" says he. "Ye'll tell *me*, won't ye? I'll love ye none the less for the evil ye've done."

Still I could not answer.

"I've been wantin' t' know," says he, his three-fingered fist softly beating the table, shaking in an intense agitation of suspense. "I've been waitin' an' waitin' for months—jus' t' hear ye say!"

I was conscious of no evil accomplished.

"Ye've a eye, Dannie!" says he.

I exposed my soul.

"That's good," says he, emphatically; "that's very good. I 'low I've fetched ye up very well."

Judith came with the bottle and little brown jug: she had displaced me from this occupation.

"O' course," says my uncle, in somewhat doubtful and ungenerous invitation, "ye'll be havin' a little darn ol' rum with a ol' shipmate. Ye've doubtless learned manners abroad," says he.

'Twas a delight to hear the fond fellow tempt me against his will: I smiled.

"Jus' a little darn, Dannie," he repeated, but in no convivial way. "Jus' a little nip — with a ol' shipmate?"

I laughed most heartily to see Judith's sisterly concern for me.

"A wee drop?" my uncle insisted, more confidently.

"I'm not used to it, sir," says I.

"That's good," he declared; "that's very good. Give the devil his due, Dannie: I've fetched ye up very well."

'Twas with delight he challenged a disputation. . . .

After this ceremony I sat with Judith on the peak of the Lost Soul. My uncle paced the gravelled walk, in the gathering dusk below, whence, by an ancient courtesy, he might benignantly spy upon the love-making. We were definite against the lingering twilight: I smiled to catch the old man pausing in the path with legs spread wide and glowing face upturned. But I had no smile for the maid, poor child! nor any word to say, save only to express a tenderness it seemed she would not hear. 'Twas very still in the world: there was no wind stirring, no ripple upon the darkening water, no step on the roads, no creak of oar-withe, no call or cry or laugh of humankind, no echo anywhere; and the sunset clouds trooped up from the rim of the sea with ominous stealth, throwing off their garments of light as they came advancing, grim and gray, upon the shadowy coast. Across the droch, lifted high above the maid and me, his slender figure black against the pale-green sky, stood John Cather on the brink of Tom Tulk's cliff, with arms extended in some ecstasy to the smouldering western fire. A star twinkled serenely in the depths of space beyond, seeming, in the mystery of that time, to be set above his forehead; and I was pleased to fancy, I recall, that 'twas a symbol and omen of his nobility. Thus the maid and I: thus we four folk, who played

the simple comedy—unknowing, every one, in the departing twilight of that day.

I reproached the maid. "Judith," says I, "you've little enough, it seems, to say to me."

"There is nothing," she murmured, "for a maid to say."

"There is much," I chided, "for a man to hear."

"Never a word, Dannie, lad," she repeated, "that a maid may tell."

I turned away.

"There is a word," says she, her voice fallen low and very sweet, soft as the evening light about us, "that a lad might speak."

"And what's that, Judith?"

"'Tis a riddle," she answered; "and I fear, poor child!" says she, compassionately, "that you'll find it hard to rede."

'Twas unkind, I thought, to play with me.

"Ah, Dannie, child!" she sighed, a bit wounded and rebuffed, it seems to me now, for she smiled in a way more sad and tenderly reproachful than anything, as she looked away, in a muse, to the fading colors in the west. "Ah, Dannie," she repeated, her face grown grave and wistful, "you've come back the same as you went away. Ye've come back," says she, with a brief little chuckle of gratification, "jus' the same!"

I thrust out my foot: she would not look at it.

"The self-same Dannie," says she, her eyes steadfastly averted.

"I've *not!*" I cried, indignantly. That the maid

should so flout my new, proud walk! 'Twas a bitter reward: I remembered the long agony I had suffered to please her. "I've *not* come back the same," says I. "I've come back changed. Have you not seen my foot?" I demanded. "Look, maid!" I beat the rock in a passion with that new foot of mine—straight and sound and capable for labor as the feet of other men. It had all been done for her—all borne to win the love I had thought withheld, or stopped from fullest giving, because of this miserable deformity. A maid is a maid, I had known—won as maids are won. "Look at it!" cries I. "Is it the same as it was? Is it crooked any more? Is it the foot of a man or a cripple?" She would not look: but smiled into my eyes—with a mist of tears gathering within her own. "No," I complained; "you will not look. You would not look when I walked up the path. I wanted you to look; but you would not. You would not look when I put my foot on the table before your very eyes. My uncle looked, and praised me; but *you* would not look." 'Twas a frenzy of indignation I had worked myself into by this time. I could not see, any more, the silent glow of sunset color, the brooding shadows, the rising masses of cloud, darkening as they came: I have, indeed, forgotten, and strangely so, the appearance of sea and sky at that moment. "You would not look," I accused the maid, "when I leaped the brook. I leaped the brook as other men may leap it; but you would not look. You would not look when I climbed the hill. Who helped you up the Lost Soul turn? Was it I? Never before did I do

it. All my life I have crawled that path. Was it the club-footed young whelp who helped you?" I demanded. "Was it that crawling, staggering, limping travesty of the strength of men? But you do not care," I complained. "You do not care about my foot at all! Oh, Judith," I wailed, in uttermost agony, "you do not care!"

I knew, then, looking far away into the sea and cloud of the world, that the night was near.

"No," says she.

"Judith!" I implored. "Judith . . . Judith!"

"No," says she, "I cannot care."

"Just *say* you do," I pleaded, "to save me pain."

"I will not tell you otherwise."

I was near enough to feel her tremble—to see her red lips draw away, in stern conviction, from her white little teeth.

"You do not care?" I asked her.

"I do not care."

'Twas a shock to hear the words repeated. "Not care!" I cried out.

"I do not care," says she, turning, all at once, from the sullen crimson of the sky, to reproach me. "Why should I care?" she demanded. "I have never cared—never cared—about your foot!"

I should have adored her for this: but did not know enough.

"Come!" says she, rising; "there is no sunset now. 'Tis all over with. The clouds have lost their glory. There is nothing to see. Oh, Dannie, lad," says she—

"Dannie, boy, there is nothing here to see! We must go home."

I was cast down.

"No glory in the world!" says she.

"No light," I sighed; "no light, at all, Judith, in this gloomy place."

And we went home. . . .

For twelve days after that, while the skirt of winter still trailed the world, the days being drear and gray, with ice at sea and cold rain falling upon the hills, John Cather kept watch on Judith and me. 'Twas a close and anxiously keen surveillance. 'Twas, indeed, unremitting and most daring, by night and day: 'twas a staring and peering and sly spying, 'twas a lurking, 'twas a shy, not unfriendly, eavesdropping, an observation without enmity or selfish purpose, ceasing not at all, however, upon either, and most poignant when the maid and I were left together, alone, as the wretched man must have known, in the field of sudden junctures of feeling. I remember his eyes—dark eyes, inquiring in a kindly way—staring from the alders of the Whisper Cove road, from the dripping hills, from the shadowy places of our house: forever in anxious question upon us. By this I was troubled, until, presently, I divined the cause: the man was disquieted, thinks I, to observe my happiness gone awry, but would not intrude even so much as a finger upon the tangle of the lives of the maid and me, because of the delicacy of his nature and breeding. 'Twas apparent, too, that he was ill: he

would go white and red without cause, and did mope or overflow with a feverish jollity, and would improperly overfeed at table or starve his emaciating body. But after a time, when he had watched us narrowly to his heart's content, he recovered his health and amiability, and was the same as he had been. Judith and I were then cold and distant in behavior with each other, but unfailing in politeness: 'twas now a settled attitude, preserved by each towards the other, and betraying no feeling of any sort whatever.

"John Cather," says I, "you've been ill."

He laughed. "You are a dull fellow!" says he, in his light way. "'Tis the penalty of honesty, I suppose; and nature has fined you heavily. I have not been ill: I have been troubled."

"By what, John Cather?"

"I fancied," he answered, putting his hands on my shoulders, very gravely regarding me as he spoke, "that I must sacrifice my hope. 'Twas a hope I had long cherished, Dannie, and was become like life to me." His voice was fallen deep and vibrant and soft; and the feeling with which it trembled, and the light in the man's eyes, and the noble poise of his head, and the dramatic arrangement of his sentences, so affected me that I must look away. "Miserable necessity!" says he. "A drear prospect! And with no more than a sigh to ease the wretched fate! And yet," says he, quite heartily, "the thing had a pretty look to it. Really, a beautiful look. There was a fine reward. A good deed carries it. Always remember that, Dan-

nie—and remember that I told you. There was a fine reward. No encouragement of applause, Dannie—just a long sigh in secret: then a grim age of self-command. By jove! but there was a splendid compensation. A compensation within myself, I mean—a recollection of at least one heroically unselfish act. There would have been pain, of course; but I should never have forgotten that I had played a man's part—better than a man's part: a hero's part, a god's part. And that might have been sufficiently comforting: I do not know—perhaps. I'll tell you about it, Dannie: the thing was to have been done," he explained, in sincere emotion, every false appearance gone from him, "for whom, do you think?"

I did not know.

"For a friend," says he.

"But John Cather," says I, "'twas too much to require of you."

His eyes twinkled.

"You've no trouble now, have you?" I asked.

"Not I!" cries he. "I have read a new fortune for myself. Trouble? Not I! I am very happy, Dannie."

"That's good," says I; "that's very good!"

XXIII

THE TIDE-RIP

NEXT day 'twas queer weather. 'Twas weather unaccountable, weather most mysteriously bent, weather that laughed at our bewilderment, as though 'twere sure of wreaking its own will against us by some trick recently devised. Never before had I known a time so subtly, viciously, confidently to withhold its omens. Queer weather, indeed! here, in early spring, with drift-ice still coming in vast floes from the north, queer weather to draw the sweat from us, while a mid-summer blue loom of the main-land hung high and fantastically shaped in the thick air. Breathless, ominously colored weather! Why, the like, for stillness and beggarly expression of intention, had never been known to Twist Tickle: they talked with indignation of it on Eli Flack's stage; 'twas a day that bred wrecks, said they. Ay, and 'twas an outrage upon the poor fishermen of that coast: what was a man to do, said they—what was he to do with his salmon-gear and cod-traps—in this evil, wilful departure from traditional procedure? And what did the weather mean? would it blow wet or dry? would it come with snow? would the wind jump

off shore or from the northeast? and how long, in the name o' Heaven, would the weather sulk in distance before breaking in honest wrath upon the coast? 'Twas enough, said they, to make a man quit the grounds; 'twas enough, with *this* sort o' thing keepin' up, t' make a man turn carpenter or go t' Sydney!

All this I heard in passing.

"Ah, well, lads," says my uncle, "ye'll find winter skulkin' jus' over the horizon. An' he'll be down," he added, confidently, "within a day or two."

I led John Cather to the brink of Tom Tulk's cliff, where, in the smoky sunshine, I might talk in secret with him. 'Twas in my mind to confide my perplexity and miserable condition of heart, without reserve of feeling or mitigation of culpable behavior, and to lean upon his wisdom and tactful arts for guidance into some happier arrangement with the maid I loved. It seemed to me, I recall, as I climbed the last slope, that I had been, all my life, an impassive lover, as concerned the welfare of the maid: that I had been ill-tempered and unkind, marvellously quick to find offence, justified in this cruel and stupid conduct by no admirable quality or grace or achievement—a lad demanding all for nothing. I paused, I recall, at the cairn, to sigh, overcome and appalled by this revelation; and thereupon I felt such a rush of strenuous intention in my own behalf—a determination to strive and scheme—that I had scarce breath to reach the edge of the cliff, and could not, for the life of me, begin to narrate my desperate state to John Cather. But John Cather was not troubled by

my silence: he was sprawled on the thick moss of the cliff, his head propped in his hands, smiling, like the alien he was, upon the ice at sea and the untimely blue loom of the main-land and the vaguely threatening color of the sky. I could not begin, wishful as I might be for his wise counsel: but must lie, like a corpse, beyond all feeling, contemplating that same uneasy prospect. I wished, I recall, that I might utter my errand with him, and to this day wish that I had been able: but then could not, being overwhelmed by this new and convincing vision of all my communion with the maid.

"By Jove!" John Cather ejaculated.

"What is it?" cries I.

"I must tell you," says he, rising to his elbow. "I can keep it no longer."

I waited.

"I'm in love," he declared. "Dannie," cries he, "I—I'm—*in love!*"

And now a peculiar change came upon the world, of which I must tell: whatever there had been of omen or beauty or curious departure from the natural appearance of sea and sky—whatever of interest or moment upon the brooding shore or abroad on the uttermost waters beyond it—quite vanished from my cognizance. 'Twas a drear day and place I dwelt in, a very dull world, not enlivened by peril or desirable object or the difficulty of toil, not excused or in any way made tolerable by a prospect of sacrificial employment. I had been ill brought up to meet this racking emergency. What had there been, in all my life, fostered in body and hap-

piness, expanding in the indulgent love and pitiably misdirected purpose of my uncle, to fit me for this denial of pure and confident desire? I tried, God knows I tried! summoning to my help all the poor measure of nobility the good Lord had endowed me with and my uncle had cultivated—I tried, God knows! to receive the communication with some wish for my friend's advancement in happiness. In love: 'twas with Judith—there was no other maid of Twist Tickle to be loved by this handsome, learned, brilliantly engaging John Cather. Nay, but 'twas all plain to me now: my deformity and perversity—my ridiculously assured aspiration towards the maid. I had forgot John Cather—the youth and person of him, his talents and winning accomplishments of speech and manner.

"And there she comes!" cries he.

'Twas Judith on the Whisper Cove road.

"You'll wish me luck, Dannie?" says he, rising. "I'll catch her on the way. I'll tell her that I love her. I can wait no longer. Wish me luck!" says he. "Wish me luck!"

I took his hand.

"Wish me luck!" he repeated.

"I wish you luck," says I.

"Thanks," says he: and was off.

I lied in this way because I would not have Judith know that I grieved for her, lest she suffer, in days to come, for my disappointment. . . .

I was faint and very thirsty, I recall: I wished that I

might drink from a brook of snow-water. 'Twas Calling Brook I visualized, which flows from the melting ice of cold, dark crevices, musically falling, beneath a canopy of springing leaves, to the waters of Sister Bight. I wished to drink from Calling Brook, and to lie down, here alone and high above the sea, and to sleep, without dreaming, for a long, long time. I lay me down on the gray moss. I did not think of Judith and John Cather. I had forgotten them: I was numb to the passion and affairs of life. I suffered no agony of any sort; 'twas as though I had newly emerged from unconsciousness—the survivor of some natural catastrophe, fallen by act of God, conveying no blame to me—a survivor upon whom there still lingered a beneficent stupor of body. Presently I discovered myself in a new world, with which, thinks I, brisking up, I must become familiar, having no unmanly regret, but a courageous heart to fare through the maze of it; and like a curious child I peered about upon this strange habitation. Near by there was a gray, weathered stone in the moss: I reached to possess it—and was amazed to find that my hand neither overshot nor fell short, but accurately performed its service. I cast the stone towards heaven: 'twas a surprise to see it fall earthward in obedience to some law I could not in my daze define—some law I had with impatient labor, long, long ago, made sure I understood and would remember. I looked away to sea, stared into the sky, surveyed the hills: 'twas the self-same world I had known, constituted of the same materials, cohering in the self-same way, obedient to the self-same laws,

fashioned and adorned the same as it had been. 'Twas the self-same world of sea and sky and rock, wherein I had so long dwelt—a world familiar to my feet and eyes and heart's experience: a world of tree-clad, greening hills, of known paths, of children's shouting and the chirp and song of spring-time. But there had come a change upon its spirit: nay! thinks I, quite proud of the conceit, its spirit had departed—the thing had died to me, and was become without meaning, an inimical mystery. Then I felt the nerves of my soul tingle with awakening: then I suffered very much.

And evening came. . . .

By-and-by, having heartened myself with courageous plans, I stepped out, with the feet of a man, upon the Whisper Cove road. I had it in mind to enjoy with Judith and John Cather the tender disclosure of their love. I would kiss Judith, by Heaven! thinks I: I would kiss her smile and blushes, whatever she thought of the deed; and I would wring John Cather's fragile right hand until his teeth uncovered and he groaned for mercy. 'Twas fearsome weather, then, so that, overwrought in the spirit as I was, I did not fail to feel the oppression of it and the instinctive alarm it aroused. 'Twas very still and heavy and sullen and uneasy, 'twas pregnant of fears, like a moment of suspense: I started when an alder branch or reaching spruce limb struck me. In this bewildering weather there were no lovers on the road; the valleys, the shadowy nooks, the secluded reaches of path, lay vacant in the melancholy

dusk. 'Twas not until I came to the last hill, whence the road tumbled down to a cluster of impoverished cottages, listlessly clinging to the barren rock of Whisper Cove, that I found Judith. John Cather was not about: the maid was with Aunt Esther All, the gossip, and was now so strangely agitated that I stopped in sheer amazement. That the child should be abject and agonized before the grim, cynical tattler of Whisper Cove! That she should gesticulate in a way so passionate! That she should fling her arms wide, that she should cover her face with her hands, that she should in some grievous disturbance beat upon her heart! I could not make it out. 'Twas a queer way, thinks I, to express the rapture of her fortune; and no suspicion enlightened me, because, I think, of the paralysis of despair upon my faculties.

I approached.

"Go 'way!" she cried.

I would not go away: 'twas Aunt Esther, the gossip, that went, and in a rout—with a frightened backward glance.

"Go 'way!" Judith pleaded. "I'm not able to bear it, Dannie. Oh, go back!"

'Twas an unworthy whim, and I knew it to be so, whatever the vagaries of maids may be, however natural and to be indulged, at these crises of emotion. She had sent John Cather away, it seemed, that she might be for a space alone, in the way of maids at such times, as I had been informed; and she would now deny to me the reflection of her happiness.

"'Tis unkind," I chided, "not to share this thing with me."

She started: I recall that her eyes were round and troubled with incomprehension.

"I've come to tell you, Judith," says I, "that I do not care."

'Twas a brave lie: I am proud of it.

"'Tis kind," she whispered.

We were alone. 'Twas dusk: 'twas dusk, to be sure, of a disquieting day, with the sky most confidently foreboding some new and surprising tactics in the ancient warfare of the wind against us; but Judith and I, being young and engaged with the passion of our years, had no consciousness of the signs and wonders of the weather. The weather concerns the old, the satisfied and disillusioned of life, the folk from whom the romance of being has departed. What care had we for the weather? 'Twas dusk, and we were alone at the turn of the road—a broad, rocky twist in the path, not without the softness of grass, where lovers had kissed in parting since fishing was begun from Twist Tickle and Whisper Cove. By the falling shades and a screen of young leaves we were hid from the prying eyes of Whisper Cove. 'Twas from me, then, that the maid withdrew into a deeper shadow, as though, indeed, 'twas not fit that we should be together. I was hurt: but fancied, being stupid and self-centred, that 'twas a pang of isolation to which I must grow used.

"Why, Judy," says I, "don't, for pity's sake, do that! Why, maid," I protested, "I don't care. I'm glad—I'm just *glad!*"

"Glad!" she faltered, staring.

"To be sure I'm glad," I cried.

She came close to me.

"I don't care," says I.

"You do not care!" she muttered, looking away. "You do not care!" she repeated, in a voice that was the faintest, most drear echo of my own.

"Not I!" I answered, stoutly. "Not a whit!"

She began to cry.

"Look up!" I besought her. "I do not care," I declared again, seeking in this way to ease her pity of me. "I do *not* care!"

'Twas a strange thing that happened then: first she kissed the cuff of my coat, in the extravagant way of a maid, and then all at once clapped her hands over her eyes, as though to conceal some guilt from a righteous person. I perceived this: I felt the shame she wished to hide, and for a moment wondered what that shame might be, but forgot, since the eyes were mine neither to have read nor to admire, but John Cather's. And what righteousness had I? None at all that she should stand ashamed before me. But there she stood, with her blue eyes hid—a maid in shame. I put my finger under her chin and tried to raise her face, but could not; nor could I with any gentleness withdraw her hands. She was crying: I wondered why. I stooped to peer between her fingers, but could see only tears and the hot color of her flushes. I could not fathom why she cried, except in excess of happiness or in adorable pity of me. The wind rose, I recall, as I puzzled;

'twas blowing through the gloaming in a soothing breeze from the west, as though to put the fears of us to sleep. A gentle gust, descending to our sheltered place, rustled the leaves and played with the maid's tawny hair; and upon this she looked up—and stepped into the open path, where, while her tears dried and her drooping helplessness vanished, she looked about the sky, and felt of the wind, to discover its direction and promise of strength. 'Twas a thing of tragical significance, as it seems to me now, looking back from the quiet mood in which I dwell; but then, having concern only to mitigate the maid's hysteria, following upon the stress of emotion I conceived she had undergone, this anxious survey of the weather had no meaning. I watched her: I lingered upon her beauty, softened, perfected, enhanced in spiritual quality by the brush of the dusk; and I could no longer wish John Cather joy, but knew that I must persist in the knightly endeavor.

"The wind's from the west," says she. "A free wind."

"For Topmast Harbor," says I; "but a mean breeze for folk bound elsewhere."

"A free wind for Topmast Harbor," she repeated.

"No matter," says I.

"'Tis a great thing," she replied, "for them that are bound to Topmast Harbor."

'Twas reproachfully spoken.

"You'll be going home now, maid," I entreated. "You'll leave me walk with you, will you not?"

She looked down in a troubled muse.

"You'll leave me follow, then," says I, "to see that you've no fear of the dark. 'Twill be dark soon, Judith, and I'm not wanting you to be afraid."

"Come!" cries she. "I *will* walk with you—home!"

She took my hand, and entwined her long fingers with mine, in the intimate, confiding way she was used to doing when we were a lad and a maid on the dark roads. Many a time, when we were lad and maid, had Judith walked forward, and I backward, to provide against surprise by the shapes of night; and many a dark time had she clutched my hand, nearing the lights of Twist Tickle, to make sure that no harm would befall her. And now, in this childish way, she held me; and she walked with me twenty paces on the path to Twist Tickle, whereupon she stopped, and led me back to that same nook of the road, and doggedly released me, and put an opposing hand on my breast.

"Do you bide here," says she; "and when I call, do you go home."

"An you wish it," I answered.

'Twas not more than twenty paces she walked towards the impoverished cottages of Whisper Cove: then turned, and came again to me. I wondered why she stood in this agony of indecision: but could not tell, nor can be blamed for the mystification, relentlessly as I blame myself.

"Dannie," she moaned, looking up, "I can go nowhere!"

"You may go home, maid," says I. "'Tis a queer thing if you may not go home."

"'Tis an unkind thing."

"Come!" I pleaded. "'Twill so very soon be dark on the road; and I'm not wantin' you t' wander in the dark."

"I cannot," says she. "I just cannot!"

"Judith," I chided, "you may. 'Tis an unseemly thing in you to say."

"But I cannot bear it, Dannie!"

"I would cry shame upon you, Judith," I scolded, "were I not so careful of your feelings."

She seemed now to command herself with a resolution of which tender maids like Judith should not be capable: 'tis too lusty and harsh a thing. I stood in awe of it. "Dannie," says she, "do you go home. I'll follow an I can. And if I do not come afore long, do you tell un to think that I spend the night with the wife of Moses Shoos. You may kiss me, Dannie, lad," says she, "an you cares t' do it."

I did care: but dared not.

"I'm wishin' for it," says she.

"But," I protested, "is you sure 'tis right?"

"'Tis quite right," she answered. "God understands."

"I'd be glad," says I.

"You may kiss me, then."

I kissed her. 'Tis a thing I regret: 'twas a kiss so lacking in earnest protraction—so without warmth and vigor. 'Twas the merest brushing of her cheek. I wish I had kissed her, like a man, in the fulness of desire I felt; but I was bound, in the last light of that day, to John Cather, in knightly honor.

"'Twas very nice," says she. "I wisht you'd do it again."

I did.

"Thank you, Dannie," she whispered.

"Judith!" I cried. "Judith! For shame, to thank me!"

"And now," says she, "you'll be off on the road. You'll make haste, will you not? And you'll think, will you not, that I spend the night with Mrs. Shoos? You'll not fret, Dannie: I'd grieve to think that you fretted. I'd not have you, for all the world, trouble about me. Not you," she repeated, her voice falling. "Not you, Dannie—dear. You'll be off, now," she urged, "for 'tis long past time for tea. And you'll tell un all, will you not, that I talked o' spendin' the night with Mrs. Moses Shoos at Whisper Cove?"

"An you wish it, Judith."

"Good-night!"

I pressed away. . . .

When I came to our house on the neck of land by the Lost Soul, I turned at the threshold to survey the weather. I might have saved myself the pains and puzzle of that regard. The print of sea and sky was foreign: I could make nothing of it. 'Twas a quiet sea, breaking, in crooning lullaby, upon the rocks below my bedroom window. It portended no disturbance: I might sleep, thinks I, with the soft whispering to lull me, being willing for the magic shoes of sleep to take me far away from this agony as never man was before. The

wind was blowing from the west: but not in gusts—a sailing breeze for the timid. I was glad that there was no venomous intention in the wind: 'twas a mild and dependable wind, grateful to such as fared easterly in the night. I wished that all men might fare that way, in the favoring breeze, but knew well enough that the purposes of men are contrary, the one to the other, making fair winds of foul, and foul of fair, so that there was no telling, of any event, whatever the apparent nature of it, whether sinister or benign, the preponderance of woe or happiness issuing from it. Over all a tender sky, spread with soft stretches of cloud, and set, in its uttermost depths, with stars. 'Twas dark enough now for the stars to shine, making the most of the moon's absence, which soon would rise. Star upon star: a multitude of serenely companionable lights, so twinkling and knowing, so slyly sure of the ultimate resolution of all the doubts and pains and perplexities of the sons of men! But still there was abroad an oppression: a forewarning, in untimely heat and strain, of disastrous weather. 'Twas that I felt when I turned from the contemplation of the stars to go within, that I might without improper delay inform our maid-servant of Judith's intention.

Then I joined my uncle. . . .

XXIV

JOHN CATHER'S FATE

'TWAS with a start that I realized the lateness of the hour. Time for liquor! 'Twas hard to believe. My uncle sat with his bottle and glass and little brown jug. The glass was empty and innocent of dregs; the stopper was still tight in the bottle, the jug brimming with clear water from our spring. He had himself fetched them from the pantry, it seemed, and was now awaiting, with genial patience, the arrival of company to give an air of conviviality to the evening's indulgence. I caught him in a smiling muse, his eye on the tip of his wooden leg; he was sailed, it seemed, to a clime of feeling far off from the stress out of which I had come. There was no question: I was not interrogated upon the lapse of the crew, as he called John Cather and Judy and me, from the politeness of attendance at dinner, which, indeed, he seemed to have forgotten in a train of agreeable recollections. He was in a humor as serene and cheerfully voluble as ever I met with in my life; and when he had bade me join him at the table to pour his first dram, he fell to on the narrative of some adventure, humorously occurring, off the

Funks, long, long ago, in the days of his boyhood. I did not attend, nor did I pour the dram: being for the time deeply occupied with reflections upon the square, black bottle on the table before me—the cure of moods my uncle had ever maintained it would work.

I got up resolved.

"Where you goin', Dannie?" says my uncle, his voice all at once vacant of cheerfulness.

"To the pantry, sir," I answered.

"Ah!" says he. "Is it ginger-ale, Dannie?"

"No, sir."

"That's good," says he, blankly; "that's very good. For Judy," he added, "is fell into the habit o' tipplin' by day, an' the ginger-ale is all runned out."

I persevered on my way to the pantry.

"Dannie!" he called.

I turned.

"Is you quite sure, lad," he asked, with an anxious rubbing of his stubble of gray beard, "that 'tisn't ginger-ale?"

"I'm wanting a glass, sir," I replied, testily. "I see but one on the table."

"Ah!" he ejaculated. "A glass!"

I returned with the glass.

"Dannie," says my uncle, feigning a relief he dared not entertain, "you was wantin' a drop o' water, wasn't you?" He pushed the little brown jug towards me. "I *'lowed* 'twas water," says he, hopefully, "when you up an' spoke about gettin' a glass from the pantry." He urged the jug in my direction. "Ay," he repeated,

not hopefully now at all, but in a whisper more like despair, "I jus' *'lowed* 'twas a drop o' water."

The jug remained in its place.

"Dannie," he entreated, with a thick forefinger still urging the jug on its course, "you is thirsty, I *knows* you is!"

I would not touch the jug.

"You been havin' any trouble, shipmate?" he gently asked.

"Yes, sir," I groaned. "Trouble, God knows!"

"Along o' Judy?"

'Twas along o' Judy.

"A drop o' water," says he, setting the glass almost within my hand, "will do you good."

'Twas so anxiously spoken that my courage failed me. I splashed water into the glass and swallowed it.

"That's good," says he; "that's very good."

I pushed the glass away with contempt for its virtue of comfort; and I laughed, I think, in a disagreeable way, so that the old man, unused to manifestations as harsh and irreligious as this, started in dismay.

"Good," he echoed, staring, unconvinced and without hope; "that's very good."

And now, a miserable determination returning, I fixed my eyes again on the square, black bottle of rum. 'Twas a thing that fairly fascinated my attention. The cure of despair was legendary, the palatable quality a thing of mere surmise: I had never experienced either; but in my childhood I had watched my uncle's fearsome moods vanish, as he downed his drams, one by

one, giving way to a grateful geniality, which sent my own bogies scurrying off, and I had fancied, from the smack of his lips, and from the eager lifting of the glasses at the Anchor and Chain, the St. John's tap-room we frequented, that a drop o' rum was a thing to delight the dry tongue and gullet of every son of man. My uncle sat under the lamp: I remember his countenance, aside from the monstrous scars and disfigurements which the sea had dealt him—its anxious regard of me, its intense concern, its gathering purpose, the last of which I did not read at that moment, but now recall and understand. 'Twas quiet and orderly in the room: the geometrical gentlemen were there riding the geometrically tempestuous sea in a frame beyond my uncle's gargoylish head, and the tidied rocking-chair, which I was used to addressing as a belted knight o' the realm, austerely abode in a shadow. I was in some saving way, as often happens in our lives, conscious of these familiar things, to which we return and cling in the accidents befalling us and in the emergencies of feeling we must all survive. The room was as our maid-servant had left it, bright and warm and orderly: there was as yet no disarrangement by the conviviality we were used to. 'Tis not at all my wish to trouble you with the despair I suffered that night, with Judith gone from me: I would not utter it—'twas too deep and unusual and tragical to disturb a world with. But still I stared at that square, black bottle of rum, believing, as faith may be, in the surcease it contained.

I watched that bottle.

"Dannie," says my uncle, with a wish, no doubt, for a diversion, "is the moon up?"

I walked to the window. "'Tis up," I reported; "but 'tis hid by clouds, an' the wind's rising."

"The wind rising?" says he. "'Twill do us no harm."

Of course, my uncle did not know which of us was at sea.

"The wind," he repeated, "will do no harm."

I sat down again: and presently got my glass before me, and reached for the square, black bottle of rum. I could stand it no longer: I could really stand it no longer—the pain of this denial of my love was too much for any man to bear.

"I'll have a drop," says I, "for comfort."

My uncle's hand anticipated me.

"Ah!" says he. "For comfort, is it?"

Unhappily, he had the bottle in his hand. 'Twas quite beyond my reach—done with any courtesy. I must wait for him to set it down again. The jug was close enough, the glass, too; but the bottle was in watchful custody. My uncle shook the bottle, and held it to the lamp; he gauged its contents: 'twas still stout—he sighed. And now he set it on the table, with his great, three-fingered hand about the neck of it, so that all hope of possession departed from me: 'twas a clutch too close and meaning to leave me room for hope. I heard the wind, rising to a blow, but had no fret on that account: there was none of us at sea,

thank God! we were all ashore, with no care for what the wind might do. I observed that my uncle was wrought up to a pitch of concern to which he was not used. He had gone pale, who was used, in exaltation of feeling, to go crimson and blue in the scars of him; but he had now gone quite white and coldly sweaty, in a ghastly way, with the black bottle held up before him, his wide little eyes upon it. I had never before known him to be in fact afraid; but he was now afraid, and I was persuaded of it, by his pallor, by his trembling hand, by the white and stare of his eyes, by the drooping lines of his poor, disfigured face. He turned from the bottle to look at me; but I could not withstand the poignancy of his regard: I looked away—feeling some shame, for which I could not account to myself. And then he sighed, and clapped the black bottle on the table, with a thump that startled me; and he looked towards me with a resolution undaunted and determined. I shall never forget, indeed, the expression he wore: 'twas one of perfect knightliness—as high and pure and courageous as men might wear, even in those ancient times when honorable endeavor (by the tales of John Cather) was a reward sufficient to itself.

I shall never forget: I could not forget.

"Dannie," says he, listlessly, "'tis wonderful warm in here. Cast up the window, lad."

'Twas not warm. There was no fire; and the weather had changed, and the wind came in at the open door, running in cold draughts about the house. 'Twas warm with the light of the lamp, to be sure;

'twas cosey and grateful in the room: but the entering swirl of wind was cold, and the emotional situation was such in bleakness and mystery as to make me shiver.

I opened the window.

"That's good," he sighed. "How's the tide?"

"'Tis the ebb, sir."

"Could ye manage t' see Digger Rock?" he inquired.

The moon, breaking out, disclosed it: 'twas a rock near by, submerged save at low-tide—I could see it.

"Very good," says he. "Could ye hit it?"

"I've nothing to shy, sir."

"But an you had?" he insisted.

My tutor entered the hall. I heard him go past the door. 'Twas in a quick, agitated step, not pausing to regard us, but continuing up the stair to his own room. I wondered why that was.

"Eh, Dannie?" says my uncle.

"I might, sir," I answered.

"Then," says he, "try it with this bottle!"

I cast the bottle.

"That's good," says he. "Ye're a wonderful shot, Dannie. I heared un go t' smash. That's good; that's *very* good!"

We sat, my uncle and I, for an hour after that, I fancy, without managing an exchange: I would address him, but he would not hear, being sunk most despondently in his great chair by the empty, black grate, with his eyes fixed in woe-begone musing upon the toes of his ailing timber; and he would from time to time

insinuate an irrelevant word concerning the fishing, and, with complaint, the bewildering rise and fall of the price of fish, but the venture upon conversation was too far removed from the feeling of the moment to engage a reply. Presently, however, I commanded myself sufficiently to observe him with an understanding detached from my own bitterness; and I perceived that he sat hopeless and in fear, as in the days when I was seven, with his head fallen upon his breast and his eyes grown tragical, afraid, but now in raw kind and infinite measure, of the coming of night upon the world he sailed by day. I heard nothing from my tutor—no creak of the floor, no step, no periodical creaking of his rocking-chair. He had not, then, thinks I, cast off his clothes; he had not gone to reading for holy orders, as was, at intervals, his custom—he had thrown himself on his bed. But I neither cared nor wondered: I caught sight of my uncle's face again—half amazed, wholly despondent, but yet with a little glint of incredulous delight playing, in brief flashes, upon it—and I could think of nothing else, not even of Judith, in her agony of mysterious shame upon the Whisper Cove road, nor of her disquieting absence from the house, nor of the rising wind, nor of the drear world I must courageously face when I should awake from that night's sleep.

I considered my uncle.

"Do ye go t' bed, Dannie," says he, looking up at last. "Ye've trouble enough."

I rose, but did not wish to leave him comfortless in

the rising wind. I had rather sit with him, since he needed me now, it seemed, more than ever before.

"Ye'll not trouble about me, lad?"

I would not be troubled.

"That's good," says he. "No need o' your troublin' about *me*. Ol' Nick Top's able t' take care o' *his*self! That's very good."

I started away for bed, but turned at the door, as was my custom, to wish my uncle good-night. I said nothing, for he was in an indubitable way not to be disturbed—having forgotten me and the affection I sought at all times to give him. He was fallen dejectedly in his chair, repeating, "*For behold the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with the flames of fire.*" I paused at the door to watch him, and I saw that his maimed hand wandered over the table until it found his glass, and that he caught and raised the glass, and that he set it down again, and that he pushed the empty thing away.

I saw all that. . . .

And I went to bed; but I did not go to sleep. In the first place, I could not, and, for better reason, my tutor got astir the moment my door was closed. I heard his cautious descent to the dining-room. The man had been waiting to get me out of the way; but I heard him go down, and that right easily, in the fall of his stockinged feet, and in the click of his door-latch, and in the creak of the stair. I cast my clothes off in haste, but

lay wide awake in my bed—as who would not?—listening to the ominous murmur of voices from below. My tutor, it seemed, was placid and determined; my uncle was outraged. I heard the old man's voice rise in a rage, fall to a subdued complaint, patter along in beseeching. It seemed 'twas all to no purpose; my tutor was obdurate, and my uncle yielded to his demands, however unwillingly. There was the mutter of agreement, there was the click of my uncle's strong-box, there was the clink of gold coin. I listened for the pop of a new cork; but I did not hear it: I heard the jug of spring water exchange hands—no more than that. 'Twas very queer. But I was not concerned with it, after all. Let my uncle and John Cather deal with each other as they would, in any way engaging the clink of gold from my uncle's strong-box; 'twas for me, unconcerned, to look out of my window, to discover the weather. And this I did; and I found the weather threatening—very dark, with the moon hid by clouds, and blowing up in a way promising a strength of wind not to be disregarded by folk who would put to sea.

The end of this was that John Cather and my uncle came above. My tutor went straightway to his room, with steps that hastened past my door; but my uncle paused, pushed the door cautiously ajar, thrust in his head.

"Is you asleep, Dannie?" says he.

"No, sir. I'm wonderful wide awake."

"Ah, well!" he whispered, in such a way that I perceived his triumphant glee, though I could not see his

face for the darkness of my room; "you might as well turn over an' go t' sleep."

"An' why, sir?" I asked.

"Like a babe, Dannie," says he, addressing me with fondness, as though I were a little child again—"jus' like a babe."

He walked to my window and looked out to sea.

"Dirty weather the morrow, sir," I ventured.

"The lights o' the mail-boat!" he exclaimed. "She've left Fortune Harbor. Ecod, b'y!"

He withdrew at once and in haste, and I heard him stump off to my tutor's quarters, where, for a long time after that, there occurred many and mysterious noises. I could not understand, but presently made the puzzle out: John Cather was packing up. 'Twas beyond doubt; the thump and creak, the reckless pulling of drawers, steps taken in careless hurry and confusion, the agitation of the pressing need of haste, all betrayed the business in hand. John Cather was packing up: he was rejected of Judith—he was going away! It hurt me sorely to think that the man would thus in impulsive haste depart, after these years of intimate companionship, with a regard so small for my wishes in the matter. Go to sleep like a babe? I could not go to sleep at all; I could but lie awake in trouble. John Cather was packing up; he was going away! My uncle helped him with his trunks down the stairs and to the stage-head, where, no doubt, my uncle's punt was waiting to board the belated mail-boat—the mean little trunk John Cather had come with, and the great leather one I had

bought him in London. I was glad, at any rate, that my gifts—the books and clothes and what-not I had bought him abroad—were not to be left to haunt me. But that John Cather should not say good-bye! I could not forgive him that. I waited and waited, lying awake in the dark, for him to come. And come he did, when the trunks were carried away and the whistle of the mail-boat had awakened our harbor. He pushed my door open without knocking, knowing well enough that I was wide awake. 'Twas then dark in my room; he could not see me.

"Where are your matches?" says he.

I told him, but did not like the manner of his speech. 'Twas in a way to rouse the antagonism of any man, being most harsh and hateful.

"I can't find them," he complained.

"You'll find them well enough, John Cather," I chided, "an you looks with patience."

He had no patience, it seemed, but continued to fumble about, and at last, with his back turned to me, got my lamp lighted. For a moment he stood staring at the wall, as though he lacked the resolution to turn. And when he wheeled I knew that I looked upon the countenance of a man who had been broken on the wheel; and I was very much afraid. John Cather was splashed and streaked with the mud of the hills. 'Twas not this evidence of passionate wandering that alarmed me; 'twas his pallor and white lips, his agonized brows, the gloomy depth to which his bloodshot eyes had withdrawn.

"Now," says he, "I want to look at you."

I did not want to be looked at.

"Sit up!" he commanded.

I sat up in bed.

"Put the blanket down," says he. "I have come, I say, to look at you."

I uncovered to my middle.

"And *this*," says he, "is the body of you, is it?"

The lamp was moved close to my face. John Cather laughed, and began, in a way I may not set down, to comment upon me. 'Twas not agreeable. I tried to stop him. 'Twas unkind to me and 'twas most injurious to himself. He did us vile injustice. I stopped my ears against his raving, but could not shut it out. "And this is the body of you! This is the body of you!" Here was not the John Cather who had come to us clear-eyed and buoyant and kindly out of the great world; here was an evil John Cather—the John Cather of a new birth at Twist Tickle. 'Twas the man our land and hearts had made him; he had here among us come to his tragedy and was cast away. I knew that the change had been worked by love—and I wondered that love could accomplish the wreck of a soul. I tried to stop his ghastly laughter, to quiet his delirium of brutality; and presently he was still, but of exhaustion, not of shame. Again he brought the lamp close to my face, and read it, line upon line, until it seemed he could bear no longer to peruse it. What he saw there I do not know—what to give him hope or still to increase the depth of his hopelessness. He betrayed no feeling;

but the memory of his pale despair continues with me to this day, and will to the end of my years. Love has never appeared to me in perfect beauty and gentleness since that night; it can wear an ugly guise, achieve a sinister purpose, I know.

John Cather set the lamp on the table, moving in a preoccupation from which I had been cast out.

"John Cather!" I called.

My uncle shouted from below.

"John!" I urged.

"Parson," my uncle roared, "ye'll lose your passage!"

Cather blew out the light.

"John," I pleaded, "you'll not go without saying good-bye?"

He stopped on the threshold; but I did not hear him turn. I called him again; he wheeled, came stumbling quickly to my bed, caught my hand.

"Forgive me, Dannie!" he groaned. "My heart is broken!"

He ran away: I never saw him again. . . .

And now, indeed, was the world gone all awry! What had in the morning of that day been a prospect of joy was vanished in a drear mist of broken hopes. Here was John Cather departed in sore agony, for which was no cure that ever I heard of or could conceive. Here was John Cather gone with the wreck of a soul. A cynical, purposeless, brooding life he must live to his last day: there was no healing in all the world for his despair. Here with us—to whom, in the

years of our intercourse, he gave nothing but gladness—his ruin had been wrought. 'Twas not by wish of us; but there was small comfort in the reflection, since John Cather must suffer the same. Here was John Cather gone; and here, presently, was my uncle, pacing the floor below. Up and down, up and down: I thought the pat of his wooden leg would go on forever—would forever, by night and day, express the restlessness of thirst. And here was Judy, abroad, in trouble I could not now divine—'twas a thing most strange and disturbing that she should stand in distress before me. I had accounted for it, but could not now explain—not with John Cather gone. I was mystified, not agitated by alarms. I would meet the maid on the Whisper Cove road in the morning, thinks I, and resolve the puzzle. I would discover more than that. I would discover whether or not I had blundered. But this new hope, springing confidently though it did, could not thrive in the wretchedness of John Cather's departure. I was not happy.

My uncle roughly awoke me at dawn.

"Sir?" I asked.

"Judy," says he, "haves disappeared."

He held me until he perceived that I had commanded myself. . . .

XXV

TO SEA

JUDITH had vanished! Our maid-servant, astir in the child's behalf before dawn, in her anxious way, was returned breathless from Whisper Cove with the report. There was no Judith with the wife of Moses Shoos: nor had there been that night. 'Twas still but gray abroad—a drear dawn: promising a belated, sullen day. We awoke the harbor to search the hills, the ledges of the cliffs, the surf-washed shore. 'Twas my uncle hither, the maid-servant thither, myself beyond. Clamorous knocking, sudden lights in the cottages, lights pale in the murky daylight, and a subdued gathering of our kind men-folk: I remember it all—the winged haste, the fright of them that were aroused, the shadows and the stumbling of the farther roads, the sickly, sleepy lights in the windows, the troubled dawn. We dispersed: day broadened, broke gray and glum upon Twin Islands—but discovered no lost maid to us.

'Twas whispered about, soon, that the women had spoken evil of Judith in our harbor; and pursuing this ill-omened rumor, in a rage I could not command, I came at last upon the shameful truth: the women had

spoken scandal of the maid, the which she had learned from Aunt Esther All, the Whisper Cove gossip. The misfortune of gentle Parson Stump, poor man! who had in the ear of Eli Flack's wife uttered a sweetly jocular word concerning Judith and the honorable intention of John Cather, who walked with her alone on the roads, about his love-making. But, unhappily, the parson being absent-minded, 'twas into the dame's deaf ear he spoke, and his humor became, in transmission, by pure misfortune, an evil charge.

There was then no help for it, old wives being what they are: authorized by the gentle parson, depending upon the report of a dame of character, the tittle-tattle spread and settled like a mist, defiling Judith to the remotest coves of Twin Islands. And Judith was vanished! I knew then, in the gray noon of that day, why the child had cried in that leafy nook of the Whisper Cove road that she could go nowhere.

I cursed myself.

"Stop, Dannie!" cries my uncle. "She's still on the hills—somewheres there, waitin' t' be sought out an' comforted an' fetched home."

I thought otherwise.

"She've lied down there," says he, "t' cry an' wait for me an' you."

I watched him pace the garden-path.

"An' I'm not able, the day, for sheer want o' rum," he muttered, "t' walk the hills."

I looked away to the sombre hills, where she might lie waiting for him and me; but my glance ran far be-

yond, to the low, gray sky and to a patch of darkening sea. And I cursed myself again—my stupidity and ease of passion and the mean conceit of myself by which I had been misled to the falsely meek conclusion of yesterday—I cursed myself, indeed, with a live wish for punishment, in that I had not succored the maid when she had so frankly plead for my strength. John Cather? what right had I to think that she had loved him? On the hills? nay, she was not there; she was not on the hills, waiting for my uncle and me—she was gone elsewhere, conserving her independence and self-respect, in the womanly way she had. My uncle fancied she was a clinging child: I knew her for a proud and impulsively wilful woman. With this gossip abroad to flout her, she would never wait on the hills for my uncle and me: 'twas the ultimate pain she could not bear in the presence of such as loved and trusted her; 'twas the event she had feared, remembering her mother, all her life long, dwelling in sensitive dread, as I knew. She would flee the shame of this accusation, without fear or lingering, unable to call upon the faith of us. 'Twas gathering in my mind that she had fled north, as the maids of our land would do, in the spring, with the Labrador fleet bound down for the fishing. 'Twas a reasonable purpose to possess her aimless feet. She would ship on a Labradorman: she might, for the wishing—she would go cook on a north-bound craft from Topmast Harbor, as many a maid of our coast was doing. And by Heaven! thinks I, she had.

Her mother's punt was gone from Whisper Cove.

"She've lied down there on the hills," my uncle protested, "t' cry an' wait. Ye're not searchin', Dannie, as ye ought. She've *jus'* lied down, I tell ye," he whimpered, "t' wait."

'Twas not so, I thought.

"She've her mother's shame come upon her," says he, "an' she've hid."

I wished it might be so.

"Jus' lied down an' hid," he repeated.

"No, no!" says I. "She'd never weakly hide her head from this."

He eyed me.

"Not Judith!" I expostulated.

"She'd never bear her mother's shame, Dannie," says he. "She'd run away an' hide. She—she—*told* me so."

I observed my uncle: he was gone with the need of rum—exhausted and unnerved: his face all pallid and splotched. 'Twas a ghastly thing to watch him stump the gravelled walk of our garden in the gray light of that day.

"Uncle Nicholas, sir," says I, for the moment forgetting the woe of Judith's hapless state in this new alarm, "do you come within an' have a dram."

"Ye're not knowin' *how* t' search," he complained. "Ye're but a pack o' dunderheads!"

"Come, sir!" I pleaded.

"Is ye been t' Skeleton Droch?" he demanded. "She've a habit o' readin' there. No!" he growled, in a temper; "you isn't had the *sense* t' go t' Skeleton Droch."

"A dram, sir," I ventured, "t' comfort you."

"An' ye bide here, ye dunderhead!" he accused.

I put my hand on his shoulder: he flung it off. I took his arm: he wrenched himself free in an indignant passion.

"Ye're needin' it, sir," says I.

"For God's sake, child!" he cried; "do you go find the maid an' leave me be. God knows I've trouble enough without ye!"

The maid was not at Skeleton Droch: neither on the hills, nor in the hiding-places of the valleys, nor lying broken on the ledges of the cliffs, nor swinging in the sea beneath—nor was she anywhere on the land of Twin Islands or in the waters that restlessly washed the boundary of gray rock. 'Twas near evening now, and a dreary, angrily windy time. Our men gathered from shore and inland barren—and there was no Judith, nor cold, wet body of Judith, anywhere to be found. 'Twas unthinkingly whispered, then, that the maid had fled with John Cather on the mail-boat: this on Tom Tulk's Head, in its beginning, and swiftly passed from tongue to tongue. Being overwrought when I caught the surmise—'twas lusty young Jack Bluff that uttered it before me—I persuaded the youth of his error, which, upon rising, he admitted, as did they all of that group, upon my request, forgiving me, too, I think, the cruel abruptness of my argument, being men of feeling, every one. The maid was not gone with John Cather, she was not on the hills of Twin Islands; she was then fled to Topmast Harbor for self-support, that larger

settlement, whence many Labradormen put out at this season for the northerly fishing. And while, sheltered from the rising wind, the kind men-folk of our harbor talked with my uncle and me on Eli Flack's stage, there came into the tickle from Topmast Harbor, in quest of water, a punt and a man, being bound, I think, for Jimmie Tick's Cove. 'Twas by him reported that a maid of gentle breeding had come alone in a punt to Topmast in the night. And her hair? says I. She had hair, and a wonderful sight of it, says he. And big, blue eyes? says I. She *had* eyes, says he; an' she had a nose, so far as he could tell, which had clapped eyes on the maid, an' she had teeth an' feet, himself being able to vouch for the feet, which clipped it over the Topmast roads quite lively, soon after dawn, in search of a schooner bound down the Labrador.

I knew then into what service the *Shining Light* should be commissioned.

"Ay, lad," says my uncle.

"And will you ship, sir?"

"Why, Lord love us, shipmate!" he roared, indignantly, to the amazement of our folk; "is ye thinkin' I'm past my labor?"

I nodded towards Whisper Cove.

"The man," he agreed.

It came about thus that I sought out Moses Shoos, wishing for him upon this high adventure because of his chivalry. Nay, but in Twist Tickle, whatever the strength and courage and kindliness of our folk, there was no man so to be desired in a crucial emergency.

The fool of the place was beyond purchase, beyond beseeching: kept apart by his folly from every unworthy motive to action. He was a man of pure leading, following a voice, a vision: I would have him upon this sacred adventure in search of the maid I loved. 'Twas no mean errand, no service to be paid for; 'twas a high calling—a ringing summons, it seemed to me, to perilous undertakings, rewarded by opportunity for peril in service of a fond, righteous cause. Nay, but I would have this unspoiled fool: I would have for companion the man who put his faith in visions, could I but win him. I believed in visions—in the deep, limpid, mysterious springs of conduct. I believed in visions—in the unreasoning progress, an advance in the way of life not calculated, but made in unselfish faith, with eyes lifted up from the vulgar, swarming, assailing advantages of existence. My uncle and the fool and I! there was no peril upon the sea to daunt us: we would find and fetch, to her own place, in perfect honor, the maid I loved. And of all this I thought, whatever the worth of it, as I ran upon the Whisper Cove road, in the evening of that gray, blustering day.

Moses was within.

"Here you is," he drawled. "I 'lowed you'd come. How's the weather?"

"'Twill blow big guns, Moses," I answered; "and I'll not deceive you."

"Well, well!" he sighed.

And would he go with us?

"I been waitin' for you, Dannie," says he. "I been sittin' here in the kitchen—waitin'."

'Twas a hopeful word.

"If mother was here," he continued, "she'd have 'lowed I'd better wait. 'You wait for Dannie,' mother would have 'lowed, 'until he comes.' An' so I *been* waitin'."

Well, there I was.

"That was on'y mother," he added; "an', o' course, I'm married now."

Walrus Liz of the Labrador came in. I rose—and was pleasantly greeted. She sat, then, and effaced herself.

"Mrs. Moses Shoos," says Moses, with a fond look upon that woman of ill-favor and infinite tenderness, "haves jus' *got* t' be consulted."

I was grown hopeless—remembering Tumm's story of the babies.

"In a case like this," Moses confided, "mother always 'lowed a man *ought* to."

"But your wife?" I demanded.

"Oh, my goodness, Dannie!" cries he. "For shame!"

"Tell me quickly, Moses."

"Mrs. Moses Shoos," he answered, with gravest dignity, "*always* 'lows, agreein' with me—that *mother* knowed!"

'Twas in this way that Moses Shoos shipped on the *Shining Light*. . . .

Shortly now, by an arrangement long made and persistently continued, we had the *Shining Light* ready for

sea—provisioned, her water-casks full. I ran through the house upon a last survey; and I found my uncle at the pantry door, his bag on his back, peering into the dark interior of the little room, in a way most melancholy and desirous, upon the long row of bottles of rum. He sighed, closed the door with scowling impatience, and stumped off to board the ship: I was not heroic, but subtracted one from that long row, and stowed it away in a bag I carried. We dropped the anchor of the *Shining Light*, and beat out, through the tickle, to the wide, menacing sea, with the night coming down and a gale of wind blowing lustily up from the gray northeast. 'Twas thus not in flight the *Shining Light* continued her cruise, 'twas in pursuit of the maid I loved: a thing infinitely more anxious and momentous—a thing that meant more than life or death to me, with the maid gone as cook on a Labrador craft. 'Twas sunset time; but there was no sunset—no fire in the western sky: no glow or effulgent glory or lurid threat. The whole world was gone a dreary gray, with the blackness of night descending: a darkening zenith, a gray horizon lined with cold, black cloud, a coast without tender mercy for the ships of men, a black sea roughening in a rage to the northeast blasts. 'Twas all hopeless and pitiless: an unfeeling sea, but troubled, it seemed to me, by depths of woe and purpose and difficulty we cannot understand. We were bound for Topmast Harbor, on a wind favorable enough for courageous hearts; and my uncle had the wheel, and the fool of Twist Tickle and I kept the deck to serve him.

He did not call upon us to shorten sail, in answer to the old schooner's complaint; and I was glad that he did not, as was the fool also. . . .

'Twas night when we put into Topmast Harbor; but my uncle and the fool and I awoke the place without regard for its way-harbor importance or number of houses. There was no maid there, said they; there had been a maid, come at dawn, but she was fortunately shipped, as she wished to be. What maid was that? They did not know. Was she a slender, tawny-haired, blue-eyed, most beauteous maid? They did but sleepily stare. I found a man, awakened from sound slumber, who remembered: ay, there was a maid of that description, who had shipped for cook on the *Likely Lass*. And whence the *Likely Lass?* Bonavist' Bay, says he, put in for rest: a seventy-tonner, put out on the favoring wind. And was there another woman aboard? Ecod! he did not know: 'twas a craft likely enough for any maid, other woman aboard or not. And so we set out again, in the night, dodging the rocks of that tickle, by my uncle's recollection, and presently found ourselves bound north, in search of the *Likely Lass*, towards a sea that was bitter with cold and dark and wind, aboard a schooner that was far past the labor of dealing with gusts and great waves.

And in the night it came on to blow very hard from the east, with a freezing sleet, which yet grew colder, until snow mixed with it, and at last came in stifling

clouds. It blew harder: we drove on, submerged in racing froth to the hatches, sheathed in ice, riding on a beam, but my uncle, at the wheel, standing a-drip, in cloth of ice, as long ago he had stood, in the first of the cruise of the *Shining Light*, would have no sail off the craft, but humored her northward in chase of the *Likely Lass*. 'Twas a reeling, plunging, smothered progress through the breaking sea, in a ghostly mist of snow swirling in the timid yellow of our lights, shrouding us as if for death in the rush and seethe of that place. There was a rain of freezing spray upon us—a whipping rain of spray: it broke from the bows and swept past, stinging as it went. 'Twas as though the very night—the passion of it—congealed upon us. There was no reducing sail—not now, in this cold rage of weather. We were frozen stiff and white: 'twas on the course, with a clever, indulgent hand to lift us through, or 'twas founder in the crested waves that reached for us.

"Dannie!" my uncle shouted.

I sprang aft: but in the roar of wind and swish and thud of sea could not hear him.

"Put your ear close," he roared.

I heard that; and I put my anxious ear close.

"I'm gettin' kind o' cold," says he. "Is ye got a fire in the cabin?"

I had not.

"Get one," says he.

I got a fire alight in the cabin. 'Twas a red, roaring fire. I called my uncle from the cabin door. The old

man gave the wheel to the fool and came below in a humor the most genial: he was grinning, indeed, under the crust of ice upon his beard; and he was rubbing his stiff hands in delight. He was fair happy to be abroad in the wind and sea with the *Shining Light* underfoot.

"Ye got it warm in here," says he.

"I got more than that, sir," says I. "I got a thing to please you."

Whereupon I fetched the bottle of rum from my bag.

"Rum!" cries he. "Well, well!"

I opened the bottle of rum.

"Afore ye pours," he began, "I 'low I'd best— God's sake! What's that?"

'Twas a great sea breaking over us.

"Moses!" my uncle hailed.

The schooner was on her course: the fool had clung to the wheel.

"Ice in that sea, Dannie," says my uncle. "An' ye got a bottle o' rum! Well, well! Wonderful sight o' ice t' the nor'ard. Ye'll find, I bet ye, that the fishin' fleet is cotched fast somewheres long about the straits. An' a bottle o' rum for a cold night! Well, well! I bet ye, Dannie," says he, "that the *Likely Lass* is gripped by this time. An' ye got a bottle o' rum!" cries he, in a beaming fidget. "Rum's a wonderful thing on a cold night, lad. Nothin' like it. I've tried it. Was a time," he confided, "when I was sort o' give t' usin' of it."

I made to pour him a dram.

"Leave me hold that there bottle," says he. "I wants t' smell of it."

'Twas an eager sniff.

"'*Tis* rum," says he, simply.

I raised the bottle above the glass.

"Come t' think of it, Dannie," says he, with a wistful little smile, "that there bottle o' rum will do more good where you had it than where I'd put it."

I corked the bottle and returned it to my bag.

"That's good," he sighed; "that's very good!"

I made him a cup o' tea. . . .

When I got the wheel, with Moses Shoos forward and my uncle gone asleep below, 'twas near dawn. We were under reasonable sail, running blindly through the night: there were no heroics of carrying-on—my uncle was not the man to bear them. But we were frozen stiff—every block and rope of us. And 'twas then blowing up with angrier intention; and 'twas dark and very cold, I recall—and the air was thick with the dust of snow, so that 'twas hard to breathe. Congealing drops of spray came like bullets: I recall that they hurt me. I recall, too, that I was presently frozen to the deck, and that my mitts were stuck to the wheel—that I became fixed and heavy. The old craft had lost her buoyant will: she labored through the shadowy, ghostly crested seas, in a fashion the most weary and hopeless. I fancied I knew why: I fancied, indeed, that she had come close to her last harbor. And of this I soon made sure: I felt of her, just before the break of day, discovering, but with no selfish perturbation, that she was

exhausted. I felt of her tired plunges, of the stagger of her, of her failing strength and will; and I perceived —by way of the wheel in my understanding hands— that she would be glad to abandon this unequal struggle of the eternal youth of the sea against her age and mortality. And the day broke; and with the gray light came the fool of Twist Tickle over the deck. 'Twas a sinister dawn: no land in sight—but a waste of raging sea to view—and the ship laden forward with a shameful burden of ice.

Moses spoke: I did not hear him in the wind, because, I fancy, of the ice in my ear.

"Don't hear ye!" I shouted.

"She've begun t' leak!" he screamed.

I knew that she had.

"No use callin' the skipper," says he. "All froze up. Leave un sleep."

I nodded.

"Goin' down," says he. "Knowed she would."

My uncle came on deck: he was smiling—most placid, indeed.

"Well, well!" he shouted. "Day, eh?"

"Leakin'," says Moses.

"Well, well!"

"Goin' down," Moses screamed.

"Knowed she would," my uncle roared. "Can't last long in this. What's that?"

'Twas floe ice.

"Still water," says he. "Leave me have that there wheel, Dannie. Go t' sleep!"

I would stand by him.

"Go t' sleep!" he commanded. "I'll wake ye afore she goes."

I went to sleep: but the fool, I recall, beat me at it; he was in a moment snoring. . . .

When I awoke 'twas broad day—'twas, indeed, late morning. The *Shining Light* was still. My uncle and the fool sat softly chatting over the cabin table, with breakfast and steaming tea between. I heard the roar of the wind, observed beyond the framing door the world aswirl and white; but I felt no laboring heave, caught no thud and swish of water. The gale, at any rate, had not abated: 'twas blowing higher and colder. My uncle gently laughed, when I was not yet all awake, and the fool laughed, too; and they ate their pork and brewis and sipped their tea with relish, as if abiding in security and ease. I would fall asleep again: but got the smell of breakfast in my nose, and must get up; and having gone on deck I found in the narrow, white-walled circle of the storm a little world of ice and writhing space. The *Shining Light* was gripped: her foremast was snapped, her sails hanging stiff and frozen; she was listed, bedraggled, incrusted with ice—drifted high with snow. 'Twas the end of the craft: I knew it. And I went below to my uncle and the fool, sad at heart because of this death, but wishing very much, indeed, for my breakfast. 'Twas very warm and peaceful in the cabin, with pork and brewis on the table, my uncle chuckling, the fire most cheerfully thriving. I could

hear the wind—the rage of it—but felt no stress of weather.

"Stove in, Dannie," says my uncle. "She'll sink when the ice goes abroad."

I asked for my fork.

"Fill up," my uncle cautioned. "Ye'll need it afore we're through."

'Twas to this I made haste.

"More pork than brewis, lad," he advised. "Pork takes more grindin'."

I attacked the pork.

"I got your bag ready," says he.

Then I had no cause to trouble. . . .

'Twas deep night, the gale still blowing high with snow, when the wind changed. It ran to the north—shifted swiftly to the west. The ice-pack stirred: we felt the schooner shiver, heard the tumult of warning noises, as that gigantic, lethargic mass was aroused to unwilling motion by the lash of the west wind. The hull of the *Shining Light* collapsed. 'Twas time to be off. I awoke the fool—who had still soundly slept. The fool would douse the cabin fire, in a seemly way, and put out the lights; but my uncle forbade him, having rather, said he, watch the old craft go down with a warm glow issuing from her. Presently she was gone, all the warmth and comfort and hope of the world expiring in her descent: there was no more a *Shining Light;* and we three folk were cast away on a broad pan of ice, in the midst of night and driving snow. Of

the wood they had torn from the schooner against this time, the fool builded a fire, beside which we cowered from the wind; and soon, the snow failing and the night falling clear and star-lit, points of flickering light appeared on the ice beyond us. There were three, I recall, diminishing in the distance; and I knew, then, what I should do in search of Judith when the day came. Three schooners cast away beyond us; one might be the *Likely Lass:* I would search for Judith, thinks I, when day came. 'Twas very long in coming, and 'twas most bitter cold and discouraging in its arrival: a thin, gray light, with no hopeful hue of dawn in the east—frosty, gray light, spreading reluctantly over the white field of the world to a black horizon. I wished, I recall, while I waited for broader day, that some warm color might appear to hearten us, some tint, however pale and transient, to recall the kindlier mood of earth to us; and there came, in answer to my wishing, a flush of rose in the east, which waxed and endured, spreading its message, but failed, like a lamp extinguished, leaving the world all sombre and inimical, as it had been.

I must now be off alone upon my search: my wooden-legged uncle could not travel the ice—nor must the fool abandon him.

"I 'lowed ye would, lad," says he, "like any other gentleman."

I bade them both good-bye.

"Three schooners cast away t' the nor'ard," says he. "I'm hopin' ye'll find the *Likely Lass.* Good-bye,

Dannie. I 'low I've fetched ye up very well. Good-bye, Dannie."

I was moved away now: but halted, like a dog between two masters.

"Good-bye!" he shouted. "God bless ye, Dannie—God bless ye!"

I turned away.

"God bless ye!" came faintly after me.

That night I found Judith with the crew of the *Likely Lass*, sound asleep, her head lying, dear child! on the comfortable breast of the skipper's wife. And she was very glad, she said, that I had come. . . .

XXVI

THE DEVIL'S TEETH

'TWILL not, by any one, be hard to recall that the great gale of that year, blowing unseasonably with snow, exhausted itself in three days, leaving the early birds of the Labrador fleet, whose northward flitting had been untimely, wrecked and dispersed upon the sea. In the reaction of still, blue weather we were picked up by the steamer *Fortune*, a sealing-craft commissioned by the government for rescue when surmise of the disaster grew large; but we got no word of my uncle and the fool of Twist Tickle until the fore-and-after *Every Time* put into St. John's with her flag flying half-mast in the warm sunshine. 'Twas said that she had the bodies of men aboard: and 'twas a grewsome truth—and the corpses of women, too, and of children. She brought more than the dead to port: she brought the fool, and the living flesh and spirit of my uncle—the old man's body ill-served by the cold, indeed, but his soul, at sight of me, springing into a blaze as warm and strong and cheerful as ever I had known. 'Twas all he needed, says he, t' work a cure: the sight of a damned little grinnin' Chesterfieldian young gentleman! Whatever

the actual effect of this genteel spectacle, my uncle was presently on his feet again, though continuing much broken in vigor; and when he was got somewhat stronger we set out for Twist Tickle, to which we came, three days later, returning in honor to our own place.

The folk were glad that we were all come back to them. . . .

I loved Judith: I loved the maid with what exalted wish soul and body of me understood—conceiving her perfect in every grace and spiritual adornment: a maid lifted like a star above the hearts of the world. I considered my life, and counted it unworthy, as all lives must be before her: I considered my love, but found no spot upon it. I loved the maid: and was now grown to be a man, able, in years and strength and skill of mind and hand, to cherish her; and I would speak to her of this passion and dear hope, but must not, because of the mystery concerning me. There came, then, an evening when I sought my uncle out to question him; 'twas a hushed and compassionate hour, I recall, the sunset waxing glorious above the remotest sea, and the night creeping with gentle feet upon the world, to spread its soft blanket of shadows.

I remembered the gray stranger's warning.

"Here I is, lad," cries my uncle, with an effort at heartiness, which, indeed, had departed from him, and would not come again. "Here I is—havin' a little darn o' rum with Nature!"

'Twas a draught of salt air he meant.

"Dannie," says he, in overwhelming uneasiness, his voice become hoarse and tremulous, "ye got a thing on your mind!"

I found him very old and ill and hopeless; 'twas with a shock that the thing came home to me: the man was past all labor of the hands, got beyond all ships and winds and fishing—confronting, now, with an anxious heart, God knows! a future of dependence, for life and love, upon the lad he had nourished to the man that was I. I remembered, again, the warning of that gray personage who had said that my contempt would gather at this hour; and I thought, as then I had in boyish faith most truly believed, that I should never treat my uncle with unkindness. 'Twas very still and glowing and beneficent upon the sea; 'twas not an hour, thinks I, whatever the prophecy concerning it, for any pain to come upon us. My uncle was fallen back in a great chair, on a patch of greensward overlooking the sea, to which he had turned his face; and 'twas a kindly prospect that lay before his aged eyes—a sweep of softest ocean, walled with gentle, drifting cloud, wherein were the fool's great Gates, wide open to the glory beyond.

"I'm wishing, sir," said I, "to wed Judith."

"'Tis a good hope," he answered.

I saw his hand wander over the low table beside him: I knew what it sought—and that by his will and for my sake it must forever seek without satisfaction.

"Sir," I implored, "I've no heart to ask her!"

He did not answer.

"And you know why, sir," I accused him. "You know why!"

"Dannie," says he, "ye've wished for this hour."

"And I am ready, sir."

He drew then from his pocket a small Bible, much stained and wrinkled by water, which he put on the table between us. "Dannie, lad," says he, "do ye now go t' your own little room, where ye was used t' lyin,' long ago, when ye was a little lad." He lifted himself in the chair, turned upon me—his eyes frankly wet. "Do ye go there," says he, "an' kneel, like ye used t' do in the days when ye was but a little child, an' do ye say, once again, for my sake, Dannie, the twenty-third psa'm."

I rose upon this holy errand.

"'*The Lord is my shepherd*,'" my uncle repeated, looking away to the fool's great Gates, "'*I shall not want*.'"

That he should not.

"'*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters*.'"

And so it should be.

"Dannie," my uncle burst out, flashing upon me with a twinkle, as when I was a lad, "I 'low I've fetched ye up very well: for say what ye will, 'twas a wonderful little anchor I give ye t' hold to!"

I went then to the little bed where as a child I lay waiting for sleep to come bearing fairy dreams. 'Twas still and dusky in the room: the window, looking out

upon the wide, untroubled waters, was a square of glory; and the sea whispered melodiously below, as it had done long, long ago, when my uncle fended my childish heart from all the fears of night and day. I looked out upon the waste of sea and sky and rock, where the sombre wonder of the dusk was working, clouds in embers, cliffs and water turning to shadows; and I was comforted by this returning beauty. I repeated the twenty-third psalm, according to my teaching, reverently kneeling, as I was bid; and my heart responded, as it has never failed to do. I remembered: I remembered the windless dusks and fresh winds and black gales through which as a child I had here serenely gone to sleep because my uncle sat awake and watchful below. I remembered his concern and diffident caresses in the night when I had called to him to come: I remembered all that he had borne and done to provide the happiness and welfare he sought in loving patience to give the child he had. Once again, as when I was a child, the sea and sunset took my soul as a harp to stir with harmonious chords of faith; and I was not disquieted any more—nor in any way troubled concerning the disclosure of that black mystery in which I had thrived to this age of understanding. And 'twas in this mood—this grateful recollection of the multitudinous kindnesses of other years—that I got up from my knees to return to my uncle.

"Dannie," says he, having been waiting, it seemed, to tell me this, first of all, "ye'll remember—will ye not?—for your guidance an' comfort, that 'tis not a tie

o' blood betwixt you an' ol' Nick Top. He's no kin t' shame ye: he's on'y a chance acquaintance."

The tale began at the waning of the evening glory....

"Your father an' me, lad," said my uncle, "was shipmates aboard the *Will-o'-the-Wisp* when she was cast away in a nor'east gale on the Devil's Teeth, near twenty year ago: him bein' the master an' me but a hand aboard. How old is you now, Dannie? Nineteen? Well, well! You was but six months come from above, lad, when that big wind blowed your father's soul t' hell; an' your poor mother was but six months laid away. We was bound up from the Labrador that night, with a cargo o' dry fish, picked up 'long shore in haste, t' fill out a foreign bark at Twillingate. 'Twas late in the fall o' the year, snow in the wind, the sea heapin' up in mountains, an' the night as black as a wolf's throat. Your father was crowdin' on, Dannie, in the way he had, bein' a wonderful driver, an' I 'lowed he was fetchin' too close t' the Harborless Shore for safety; but I wouldn't tell un so, lad, for I didn't know un so well as I knows you, bein' on'y a hand aboard, ye see, with a word or two t' le'ward of what ye might call a speakin' acquaintance with the skipper. I 'lowed he'd strike the Rattler; but he cleared the Rattler, by good luck, an' fetched up at dawn on the Devil's Teeth, a mean, low reef o' them parts, where the poor *Will-o'-the-Wisp* broke her back an' went on in splinters with the sea an' wind. 'Twas over soon, Dannie; 'twas all over soon, by kindness o'

Providence: the ol' craft went t' pieces an' was swep' on t' le'ward by the big black waves."

In the pause my uncle's hand again searched the low table for the glass that was not there.

"I'm not wantin' t' tell ye," he muttered.

I would not beg him to stop.

"Me an' your father, Dannie," he continued, presently, dwelling upon the quiet sunset, now flaring with the last of its fire, "somehow cotched a grip o' the rock. 'Twas a mean reef t' be cast away on, with no dry part upon it: 'twas near flush with the sea, an' flat an' broad an' jagged, slimy with sea-weed; an' 'twas washed over by the big seas, an' swam in the low roll o' the black ones. I 'low, Dannie, that I was never afore cotched in such a swirl an' noise o' waters. 'Twas wonderful—the thunder an' spume an' whiteness o' them big waves in the dawn! An' 'twas wonderful—the power o' them—the wolfish way they'd clutch an' worry an' drag! 'Twas a mean, hard thing t' keep a grip on that smoothed rock; but I got my fingers in a crack o' the reef, an' managed t' hold on, bein' stout an' able, an' sort of savage for life—in them old days. Afore long, your poor father crep' close, lad, an' got his fingers in the same crack. 'Twas all done for you, Dannie, an' ye'll be sure t' bear it in mind—will ye not?—when ye thinks o' the man hereafter. I seed the big seas rub un on the reef, an' cut his head, an' break his ribs, as he come crawlin' towards me. 'Twas a long, long time afore he reached the place. Ye'll not forget it—will ye lad?—ye'll surely not forget it when ye thinks o' the man that was your father."

I looked at the sward, soft and green with summer, and roundabout upon the compassionate shadows of evening.

"'Nick,' says your father," my uncle continued, "'does ye hear them men?'

"They was all gone down, poor souls! I knowed.

"'Nine men o' the crew,' says he, 'drownin' there t' le'ward.'

"'Twas o' Mary Luff's son I thought, that poor lad! for I'd fetched un on the v'y'ge.

"'I hear un callin',' says he.

"'Twas but a fancy: they was no voices o' them drowned men t' le'ward.

"'Nick,' says he, 'I didn't mean t' wreck her here. I was 'lowin' t' strike the Long Cliff, where they's a chance for a man's life. Does ye hear me, Nick?' says he. 'I didn't mean t' do it *here!*'

"'Skipper,' says I, 'was ye meanin' t' wreck that there ship?'

"'Not here,' says he.

"'Was ye meanin' t' *do* it?' says I."

My uncle paused.

"Go on, sir," said I.

"Dannie," said he, "they come, then, three big seas, as seas will; an' I 'low"—he touched the crescent scar—"I got this here about that time."

'Twas quite enough for me.

"'Skipper,' says I," my uncle continued, "'what did ye go an' do it for?'

"'I got a young one t' St. John's,' says he.

"'"'Tis no excuse,' says I.

"'"Ay,' says he, 'but I was 'lowin' t' make a gentleman of un. He's the on'y one I got,' says he, 'an' his mother's dead.'

"'"'Twas no way t' go about it,' says I.

"'"Ye've no lad o' your own,' says he, 'an' ye don't know. They was a pot o' money in this, Top,' says he. 'I was 'lowin' t' make a gentleman o' my young one an I lived through; but I got t' go—I got t' go t' hell an' leave un. They's ice in these big seas,' says he, 'an I've broke my left arm, an' can't stand it much longer. But you'll live it out, Top; you'll live it out—I knows ye will. The wind's gone t' the nor'west, an' the sea's goin' down; an' they'll be a fleet o' Labrador craft up the morrow t' pick you up. An' I was 'lowin', Top,' says he, 'that you'd take my kid an' fetch un up as his mother would have un grow. They isn't no one else t' do it,' says he, 'an' I was 'lowin' you might try. I've broke my left arm,' says he, 'an' got my fingers froze, or I'd live t' do it myself. They's a pot o' money in this, Top,' says he. 'You tell the owner o' this here ship,' says he, 'an' he'll pay—he've got t' pay!'

"I had no wish for the task, Dannie—not bein' much on nursin' in them days.

"'"I got t' go t' hell for this, Top,' says your father, 'an' I 'lowed ye'd ease the passage.'

"'"Skipper, sir,' says I, 'is ye not got a scrap o' writin'?'

"He fetched out this here little Bible.

"'"Top,' says he, 'I 'lowed I'd have a writin' t' make

sure, the owner o' this here ship bein' on'y a fish speculator; an' I got it in this Bible.'

"'Then,' says I, 'I'll take that young one, Tom Callaway, if I weathers this here mess.'

"'Ay,' says he, 'but I'm not wishin' t' go t' hell for *that*.'

"'Twas come broad day now.

"'An I'm but able, Tom Callaway,' says I, 'I'll make a gentleman of un t' ease your pains.'

"'Would ye swear it?' says he.

"I put my hand on the Book; an' I knowed, Dannie, when I made ready t' take that oath, out there on the Devil's Teeth, that I'd give my soul t' hell for the wickedness I must do. I done it with my eyes wide open t' the burden o' evil I must take up; an' 'twas sort o' hard t' do, for I was by times a Christian man, Dannie, in them ol' days, much sot on church an' prayer an' the like o' that. But I seed that your poor father was bent on makin' a gentleman out o' you t' please your dead mother's wishes, an' I 'lowed, havin' no young un o' my own, that I *didn't* know much about the rights of it; an' I knowed he'd suffer forever the pains o' hell for what he done, whatever come of it, an' I 'lowed 'twould be a pity t' have the murder o' seven poor men go t' waste for want o' one brave soul t' face the devil. 'Nick,' thinks I, while your father, poor, doomed man! watched me—I can see here in the dusk the blood an' water on his white face—'Nick,' thinks I, 'an you was one o' them seven poor, murdered men, ye'd want the price o' your life paid t' that wee young

one. From heaven or hell, Nick, accordin' t' which place ye harbored in,' thinks I, 'ye'd want t' watch that little life grow, an' ye'd like t' say t' yourself, when things went ill with ye,' thinks I, 'that the little feller ye died for was thrivin', anyhow, out there on earth.' An' I 'lowed, for your wee sake, Dannie, an' for the sake o' the seven poor, murdered men, whose wishes I read in the dead eyes that looked into mine, an' for the sake o' your poor, fond father, bound soon for hell, that I'd never let the comfort o' my mean soul stand in the way o' fetchin' good t' your little life out o' all this woe an' wickedness. I 'lowed, Dannie, then an' there, on the Devil's Teeth, that could I but manage to endure, I'd stand by your little body an' soul t' the end, whatever become o' me."

'Twas but a tale my uncle told: 'twas not an extenuation—not a plea.

"'Tide's risin', Nick,' says your father. 'I can't stand it much longer with my broken arm an' froze fingers. Nick,' says he, 'will ye swear?'

"I was afraid, Dannie, t' swear it.

"'Won't ye?' says he. 'He've his mother's eyes—an' he'll be a wonderful good lad t' you.'

"I couldn't, Dannie.

"'For God's sake, Nick!' says he, 'swear it, an' ease my way t' hell.'

"'I swear!' says I.

"'Then,' says he, 'you turn the screws on the owner o' that there ship. The writin' is all you needs. You make a gentleman o' my lad, God bless un! accordin'

t' the wishes of his mother. Give un the best they is in Newf'un'land. Nothin' too good in all the world for Dannie. You bear in mind, Nick,' says he, 'that I'm roastin' in hell,' says he, '*payin'* for his education!'"

My uncle's hand approached the low table, but was in impatience withdrawn; and the old man looked away —northward: to the place, far distant, where the sea still washed the Devil's Teeth.

"I've bore it in mind," he muttered.

Ay! and much more than that: the wreck of his own great soul upon my need had clouded twenty years of life with blackest terror of the unending pains of perdition.

"'Tis a lovely evening, Dannie," he sighed. "'Tis so still an' kind an' beautiful. I've often 'lowed, in weather like this, with the sea at peace an' a red sky givin' promise o' mercy for yet one day," said he, "that I'd like t' live forever—jus' live t' fish an' be an' hope."

"I wisht ye might!" I cried.

"An' t' watch ye grow, Dannie," said he, turning suddenly upon me, his voice fallen low and tremulous with affectionate feeling and pride. "Life," says he, so earnestly that I was made meek by the confession, "held nothin' at all for me but the Christian hope o' heaven until ye came; an' then, when I got ye, 'twas filled full o' mortal, unselfish, better aims. I've loved ye well, lad, in my own delight," says he. "I've loved ye in a wishful way," he repeated, "quite well."

I was humble in this presence. . . .

"Your father," my uncle resumed, "couldn't stand

the big seas. I cotched un by the jacket, an' held un with me, so long as I was able, though he 'lowed I might as well let un go t' hell, without drawin' out the fear o' gettin there. 'On'y a minute or two, Nick,' says he. 'Ye might as well let me get there. I'm cold, froze up, an' they's more ice comin' with this sea,' says he; 'they was a field o' small ice up along about the Sissors,' says he, 'an' I 'low it haves come down with the nor'east wind. The sea,' says he, 'will be full of it afore long. Ye better let me go,' says he. ''Tisn't by any means pleasant here, an' the on'y thing I wants, now that ye've took the oath,' says he, 'is t' get warm. Ye better let me go. I got t' go, anyhow,' says he, 'an' a hour or two don't make no difference.' An' so, with the babe that was you in mind, an' with my life t' save for your sake, I let un go t' le'ward, where the seven murdered men had gone down drowned. 'Twas awful lonesome without un, when the tide got high an' the seas was mean with chunks o' ice. Afore that," my uncle intensely declared, "I was admired o' water-side widows, on account o' looks; but,' says he, touching his various disfigurements, "I was broke open here, an' I was broke open there, by bein' rubbed on the rocks an' clubbed by the ice at high-tide. When I was picked up by Tumm. o' the *Quick as Wink* (bein' bound up in fish), I 'lowed I might as well leave the cook, which is now dead, have his way with the butcher-knife an' sail-needle; an' so I come t' St. John's as ye sees me now, not a wonderful sight for looks, with my leg an' fingers gone, but ready, God knows! t' stand by the young un

I was livin' t' take an' rear. Ye had been, all through it, Dannie," he added, simply, "the thing that made me hold on; for when your father was gone t' le'ward, an' I begun t' think o' ye, a wee babe t' St. John's, I got t' love ye, lad, as I've loved ye ever since.

"'Tis a lovely evening," he added; "'tis a wonderful civil and beautiful time, with all them clouds, like coals o' fire, in the west."

'Twas that: an evening without guile or menace—an hour most compassionate.

"The owner o' the *Will-o'-the-Wisp*," says my uncle, "wasn't no Honorable in them days; he was but a St. John's fish speculator with a taste for low politics. But he've become a Honorable since, on the fortune he've builded from that wreck, an' he's like t' end a knight o' the realm, if he've money enough t' carry on an' marry the widow he's after. 'Twas not hard t' deal with un—leastways, 'twas not hard when I loaded with rum, which I was used t' doin', Dannie, as ye know, afore I laid 'longside of un in the wee water-side place he'd fetch the money to. No, no! 'Twas not easy: I'd not have ye think it—'twas hard, 'twas bitter hard, Dannie, t' be engaged in that dirty business. I'd not have ye black your soul with it; an' I was 'lowin, Dannie, afore the parson left us, t' teach un how t' manage the Honorable, t' tell un about the liquor an' the bluster, t' show un how t' scare the Honorable on the Water Street pavement, t' teach un t' threaten an' swear the coward's money from his pocket, for I wasn't wantin' *you*, Dannie, t' know the trial an' wickedness o' the foul deed, bein' in love

with ye too much t' have ye spoiled by sin. I 'low I had that there young black-an'-white parson near corrupted: I 'low I had un worked up t' yieldin' t' temptation, lad, when he up an' left us, along o' Judy. An' there's the black-an'-white parson, gone God knows where! an' here's ol' Nick Top, sittin' on the grass at evenin', laid by the heels all along o' two days o' wind on the ice!"

"And so you brought me up?" says I.

"Ay, Dannie," he answered, uneasily; "by black-mail o' the Honorable. I got t' go t' hell for it, but I've no regrets on that account," says he, in a muse, "for I've loved ye well, lad; an' as I sit here now, lookin' back, I knows that God was kind t' give me you t' work an' sin for. I'll go t' hell—ay, I'll go t' hell! Ye must never think, lad, when I gets down there, that I'm sorry for what I done. I'll not be sorry—not even in hell—for I'll think o' the years when you was a wee little lad, an' I'll be content t' remember. An' do you go away, now, lad," he added, "an' think it over. Ye'll not judge me now; ye'll come back, afore long, an' then judge me."

I moved to go.

"Dannie!" he called.

I turned.

"I've gone an' tol' Judy," says he, "lest she learn t' love ye for what ye was not."

'Twas no matter to me. . . .

This, then, was the heart of my mystery! I had been fed and adorned and taught and reared in luxury by the

murder of seven men and the merciless blackmail of an ambitious villain. What had fed me, warmed me, clothed me had been the product of this horrible rascality. And my father was the murderer, whom I had dreamed a hero, and my foster-father was the persecutor, whom I had loved for his kindly virtue. And paid for!—all paid for in my father's crime and damnation. This—all this—to make a gentleman of the ill-born, club-footed young whelp of a fishing skipper! I laughed as I walked away from this old Nick Top: laughed to recall my progress through these nineteen years—the proud, self-righteous stalking of my way.

'Twas a pretty figure I had cut, thinks I, with my rings and London clothes, in the presence of the Honorable, with whom I had dealt in pride and anger! 'Twas a pretty figure I had cut, all my life—the whelp of a ruined, prostituted skipper: the issue of a murderous barratry! What protection had the defenceless child that had been I against these machinations? What protest the boy, growing in guarded ignorance? What appeal the man in love, confronted by his origin and shameful fostering? Enraged by this, what I thought of my uncle's misguided object and care I may not here set down, because of the bitterness and injustice of the reflections; nay, but I dare not recall the mood and wicked resentment of that time.

And presently I came to the shore of the sea, where I sat down on the rock, staring out upon the waters. 'Twas grown dark then, of a still, religious night, with the black sea lapping the rocks, infinitely continuing in

restlessness, and a multitude of stars serenely twinkling in the uttermost depths of the great sky. 'Twas of this I thought, I recall, but cannot tell why: that the sea was forever young, unchanging in all the passions of youth, from the beginning of time to the end of it; that the mountains were lifted high, of old, passionless, inscrutable, of unfeeling snow and rock, dwelling above the wish of the world; that the sweep of prairie, knowing no resentment, was fruitful to the weakest touch; that the forests fell without complaint; that the desert, hopeless, aged, contemptuous of the aspirations of this day, was of immutable bitterness, seeking some love long lost to it nor ever to be found again; but that the sea was as it had been when God poured it forth—young and lusty and passionate—the only thing in all the fleeting world immune from age and death and desuetude.

'Twas strange enough; but I knew, thank God! when the rocking, crooning sea took my heart as a harp in its hands, that all the sins and errors of earth were of creative intention and most beautiful, as are all the works of the God of us all. Nay, but, thinks I, the sins of life are more lovely than the righteous accomplishments. Removed by the starlit sky, wherein He dwells —removed because of its tender distance and beauty and placidity, because of its compassion and returning gift of faith, removed by the vast, feeling territory of sensate waters, whereupon He walks, because they express, eternally, His wrath and loving kindness—carried far away, in the quiet night, I looked back, and I understood, as never before—nor can I ever hope to know

again—that God, being artist as we cannot be, had with the life of the world woven threads of sin and error to make it a pattern of supernal beauty, that His purpose might be fulfilled, His eyes delighted.

And 'twas with the healing of night and starry sky and the soft lullaby of the sea upon my spirit—'twas with this wide, clear vision of life, the gift of understanding, as concerned its exigencies—that I arose and went to my uncle. . . .

I met Judith on the way: the maid was hid, waiting for me, in the deep shadow of the lilacs and the perfume of them, which I shall never forget, that bordered the gravelled path of our garden.

"You've come at last," says she. "He've been waiting for you—out there in the dark."

"Judith!" says I.

She came confidingly close to me.

"I've a word to say to you, maid," says I.

"An' you're a true man?" she demanded.

"'Tis a word," says I, "that's between a man an' a maid. 'Tis nothing more."

She held me off. "An' you're true," she demanded, "to them that have loved you?"

"As may or may not appear," I answered.

"Ah, Dannie," she whispered, "I cannot doubt you!"

I remember the scent of the lilacs—I remember the dusk—the starlit sky.

"I have a word," I repeated, "to say to you."

"An' what's that?" says she.

"'Tis that I wish a kiss," says I.

She put up her dear red lips.

"Ay," says I, "but 'tis a case of no God between us. You know what I am and have been. I ask a kiss."

Her lips still invited me.

"I love you, Judith," says I, "and always have."

Her lips came closer.

"I would be your husband," I declared.

"Kiss me, Dannie," she whispered.

"And there is no God," says I, "between us?"

"There is no God," she answered, "against us."

I kissed her.

"You'll do it again, will you not?" says she.

"I'll kiss your sweet tears," says I. "I'll kiss un away."

"Then kiss my tears."

I kissed them away.

"That's good," says she; "that's very good. An' now?"

"I'll speak with my uncle," says I, "as you knowed I would."

I sought my uncle.

"Sir," says I, "where's the writing?"

"'Tis in your father's Bible," he answered.

I got it from the Book and touched a flaring match to it. "'Tis the end of *that*, sir," says I. "You an' me, sir," says I, "will be shipmates to the end of the voyage."

He rose.

"You're not able, sir," says I.

"I is!" he declared.

'Twas with difficulty he got to his feet, but he managed it; and then he turned to me, though I could see him ill enough in the dark.

"Dannie, lad," says he, "I 'low I've fetched ye up very well. Ye is," says he, "a—"

"Hush!" says I; "don't say it."

"I will!" says he.

"Don't!" I pleaded.

"You *is*," he declared, "a gentleman!"

The night and the abominable revelations of it were ended for my uncle and me in this way. . . .

And so it came about that the Honorable was troubled no more by our demands, whatever the political necessities that might assail him, whatever the sins of other days, the black youth of him, that might fairly beset and harass him. He was left in peace, to follow his career, restored to the possessions my uncle had wrested from him, in so far as we were able to make restitution. There was no more of it: we met him afterwards, in genial intercourse, but made no call upon his money-bags, as you may well believe. My uncle and I made a new partnership: that of Top & Callaway, of which you may have heard, for the honesty of our trade and the worth of the schooners we build. He is used to taking my hand, upon the little finger of which I still wear the seal-ring he was doubtful of in the days when Tom Bull inspected it. "A D for Dannie," says he, "an' a C for Callaway, an' betwixt the two," says he, "lyin' snug as you like, is a T for Top! An' that's

the way I lies," says he, "ol' Top betwixt the Dannie an' the Callaway. An' as for the business in trade an' schooners that there little ol' damned Chesterfieldian young Dannie haves builded from a paddle-punt, with Judy t' help un," says he, "why don't ye be askin' me!" And the business I have builded is good, and the wife I have is good, and the children are good. I have no more to wish for than my uncle and wife and children. 'Tis a delight, when the day's work is done, to sit at table, as we used to do when I was a child, with the geometrical gentleman framed in their tempestuous sea beyond, and to watch my uncle, overcome by Judith's persuasion, in his old age, sip his dram o' hot rum. The fire glows, and the maid approves, and my uncle, with his ailing timber comfortably bestowed, beams largely upon us.

"Jus' a nip," says he. "Jus' a wee nip o' the best Jamaica afore I goes t' bed."

I pour the dram.

"For the stomach's sake, Dannie," says he, with a gravity that twinkles against his will, "accordin' t' the Apostle."

And we are glad that he has that wee nip o' rum t' comfort him. . . .

'Twas blowing high to-day. Tumm, of the *Quick as Wink*, beat into harbor for shelter. 'Twas good to know that the genial fellow had come into Twist Tickle. I boarded him. 'Twas very dark and blustering and dismally cold at that time. The schooner was bound

down to the French shore and the ports of the Labrador. I had watched the clouds gather and join and forewarn us of wind. 'Twas an evil time for craft to be abroad, and I was glad that Tumm was in harbor. "Ecod!" says he, "I been up t' see the fool. They've seven," says he. "Ecod! think o' that! I 'low Walrus Liz o' Whoopin' Harbor got all she wanted. Seven!" cries he. "Seven kids! Enough t' stock a harbor! An' they's talk o' one o' them," says he, "bein' trained for a parson." I think the man was proud of his instrumentality. "I've jus' come from the place," says he, "an' he've seven, all spick an' span," says he, "all shined an' polished like a cabin door-knob!" I had often thought of it, and now dwelt upon it when I left him. I remembered the beginnings of our lives, and I knew that out of the hopelessness some beauty had been wrought, in the way of the God of us all: which is the moral of my tale.

"Think o' that!" cries Tumm, of the *Quick as Wink.*

I did think of it.

"Think o' that!" he repeated.

I had left Tumm below. I was alone. The night was still black and windy; but of a sudden, as I looked up, the clouds parted, and from the deck of the *Quick as Wink* I saw, blind of vision as I was, that high over the open sea, hung in the depth and mystery of space, there was a star. . . .

THE END